

REVIEWS

Jun Qian: *Towards a Relational-Perspective Approach to Syntactic Semantics*, Beijing: People's Education Press 2001, 289 pp., ISBN 7-107-14429-4

Jun Qian's book *Towards a Relational-Perspective Approach to Syntactic Semantics* is a study of the relation between syntactic, semantic, and information structures of sentences. It examines the human experience of the extra-linguistic reality and its reflection in semantic and syntactic structures of language. The author presents his functional interpretation of various linguistic phenomena against the background of alternative approaches, contributing significantly towards mutual understanding of scholars with different theoretical roots.

The book consists of six chapters preceded by a preface by Susumu Kuno providing a concise overview of approaches to functional syntax, and a preface by Petr Sgall introducing the basics of the Prague structural and functional approach.

Chapter 1 'Introduction' presents the view of language as a communicative and cognitive tool, defines the position of syntactic semantics in linguistic theory, and states the purpose and scope of the book, i.e. the examination of '(1) semantic relations among linguistic items within a syntactic structure, and (2) relations between semantic structure and syntactic structure' (5).

Chapter 2, 'A survey of some relevant studies' presents the approaches to syntactic semantics developed by Vilém Mathesius, František Daneš, Michael Halliday, Charles Fillmore, and Wallace Chafe. The concise overview is accompanied by examples illustrating the major concepts within these theories.

Chapters 3 'A relational-perspective approach: relations' and Chapter 4 'A relational-perspective approach: perspectives' provide a thorough survey of Qian's own approach to syntactic semantics. The author examines the basic linguistic relations reflecting our experience of the extra-linguistic reality. He studies the semantic relations within sentence structures, i.e. the relations between the agent, patient, beneficiary, experiencer, instrument, and location, and the implications of various modifications of sentence patterns containing these semantic units. Qian uses examples of various sentence structures in English, Chinese and German to illustrate how different languages answer the question 'Who did what to whom with what when and where?' (135). The author examines how different syntactic and semantic structures function within the relational framework and what perspectives the structures express. The term "perspective" denotes the relation between syntactic elements (the "core perspective" being the subject-verb and the object-verb relation, and the "extended perspective" the relation between the verb and the remaining sentence elements (141)), as well as the speaker's communicative intention. Qian accepts Jan Firbas's division of a sentence into theme, transition, and rheme, and develops Firbas's concept of communicative dynamism into an interesting quantification system.

In Chapter 5 'Internal dative: a relational-perspective approach', Qian puts his theoretical framework to test by applying it to the interpretation of English dative constructions. The framework is capable of answering a number of questions related to the syntactic, semantic, and information structures of language.

Chapter 6 'Concluding remarks' provides a brief summary of Qian's theoretical framework and identifies areas that need further investigation.

Jun Qian's book is an interesting contribution to the study of human communication. The author has developed a broadly based theoretical framework capable of explaining linguistic phenomena that have attracted scholars of different linguistic schools. His framework providing useful tools for interpreting different syntactic and semantic structures has enriched the functionalist understanding of language.

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