

Introduction to functional grammar

By Georgina Barton

Process

What's happening? (Verbs/verb groups)

doing, thinking, saying, being

Participant

Who or what is involved? (Nouns, pronouns, noun groups)

people, place, things or ideas

(before or after the process)

Circumstance

Why.....How.....When.....Where.....With whom....

is the process happening?

Attributes

Words that describe participants and circumstances

(Adjectives/adjectival groups)

Functional grammar:

- is a modern study of language which is conscious of *more than just words*
- attempts to describe the language people use (their language choices) by stressing the *function* that the language performs (social purpose)
- looks at *chunks of text* and describes why the language is expressed in the way that it is (according to context, situation, subject matter, who is involved and the relations of power, and the mode or form of delivery)

Traditional	Functional
Nouns, noun groups Pronouns	Participants
Adjectives, adjectival groups	Attributes
Verbs, verb groups	Processes
Adverbs, adverbial groups	Circumstances

TEXT 2

Fantastic Mr Fox by Roald Dahl

Down in the valley there were three farms. The owners of these farms had done well. They were rich men. They were also nasty men. All three of them were about as nasty and mean as any men you could meet. Their names were Farmer Boggis, Farmer Bunce and Farmer Bean.

Boggis was a chicken farmer. He kept thousands of chickens. He was enormously fat. This was because he ate three boiled chickens smothered with dumplings every day for breakfast, lunch and supper...

(the two other farmers are introduced in similar vein and with similar patterning of language choices)

On a hill above the valley there was a wood. In the wood there was a huge tree. Under the tree there was a hole. In the hole lived Mr. and Mrs Fox and their four Small Foxes.

Identify the following in the above text:

Participants

Processes

Circumstances

Attributes

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Level 1

Participants

Processes

Circumstances

Attributes

Level 2

Focalisation – internal, external

Mood and modality

Cohesion

Theme/rheme