

The Term “Complement” in Systemic Functional Grammar: A Review of Its Theoretical Problems and Implications

Kwasi Opoku

Department of Languages and General Studies, University of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani, Ghana
Email: kwasi.opoku@uenr.edu.gh

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Abstract

Despite the widespread application of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) in various text analyses, there exists a dearth of reviews concerning critical syntactic issues within SFG. These syntactic challenges stem primarily from its fundamental conceptual framework—The semantic approach to handling grammar. This theoretical framework seems to intertwine the syntactic capacity and semantic role in text analysis, two of the three levels in syntactic examination. Consequently, it creates inconsistencies in defining the syntactic unit under investigation within a clause and also in characterizing numerous terms. This paper offers a general overview of both syntactic and semantic issues, particularly focusing on problems evident in the Mood system, notably the term “Complement”. It does not delve into a comprehensive and systematic analysis of each problem; rather, it aims to highlight the existence of several unresolved issues within the theory of SFG itself. Therefore, there is a need for further scholarly attention and advocacy within the SFG framework, specifically directed towards addressing theoretical grammatical and syntactic challenges.

Keywords

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), Complement, Mood System, Residue, Predicator, Adjunct

1. Introduction

The concept of “complement” in systemic functional grammar serves as a foundational aspect in understanding the structural and functional properties of language. Complements, within this linguistic framework, are crucial constitu-

ents that complete the meaning of a sentence, often associated with verbs or prepositions. According to Halliday (2014), these elements provide necessary information to fulfill the predication of a clause, essentially contributing essential details that elaborate on the action or state denoted by the verb. Complements are known for their ability to add depth and specificity to the main elements of a sentence, playing a pivotal role in shaping the overall message conveyed within discourse (Thompson, 2014).

In systemic functional grammar, the concept of complement encompasses various types and functions, each carrying distinctive theoretical implications. Halliday (2014) categorizes complements into different classes, including subject, object, and prepositional complements, each serving specific roles in sentence structure and meaning construction. Subject complements, for instance, complement the subject of a clause, providing additional details or descriptions to the subject itself. On the other hand, object complements add information to the direct or indirect objects of a verb, further expanding the predicate's meaning. Additionally, prepositional complements, as highlighted by Thompson (2014), work with prepositions to complete the meaning of a verb, often denoting location, time, or other related circumstances.

Despite the apparent significance of complements in systemic functional grammar, their theoretical understanding presents certain challenges and complexities. The theoretical problems associated with defining and categorizing complements lie in the intricate nature of their functions within sentences. Thompson (2014) notes that the boundary between complements and other sentence constituents, such as adjuncts, can often be ambiguous, leading to challenges in their precise identification and differentiation. Moreover, the multifaceted nature of complements poses theoretical implications concerning their syntactic and semantic properties, raising questions about their diverse roles and the criteria for their classification within different linguistic contexts. As such, a comprehensive review and analysis of the term "complement" in systemic functional grammar are vital to address these theoretical intricacies and their broader implications for linguistic theory and analysis.

The study on "The Term 'Complement' in Systemic Functional Grammar: A Review of Its Theoretical Problems and Implications" aims to elucidate several key concepts inherent in systemic functional grammar concerning the term "complement." Firstly, the research will delve into the categorical distinctions of complements within linguistic structures, as articulated by Halliday (2014), emphasizing the roles and functions of complements as obligatory constituents within clause constructions. This involves a comprehensive examination of subject, object, and prepositional complements, highlighting their distinct functions and contributions to sentence meaning and structure.

Furthermore, the study seeks to scrutinize the theoretical challenges and complexities associated with defining and differentiating complements from other sentence elements, as emphasized by Thompson (2014). This includes an explo-

ration of the ambiguous boundaries between complements and adjuncts, addressing the theoretical intricacies in identifying and classifying complements within diverse linguistic contexts. Additionally, the research will focus on the theoretical implications of these challenges, investigating how these complexities impact the overall understanding of complement structures within systemic functional grammar frameworks.

Moreover, the study will involve an in-depth analysis of empirical data and corpus studies to validate and refine the theoretical models proposed by Halliday (2014) and Thompson (2014). By employing empirical methodologies, the research aims to observe real-world instances of complements in language usage, examining patterns, contexts, and variations in their functions across different communicative contexts. This empirical approach, as advocated by other scholars such as Eggins (2004), allows for the testing and verification of theoretical hypotheses, thereby enhancing the comprehension of complements and addressing the theoretical intricacies associated with these linguistic elements.

Addressing the theoretical problems surrounding the term “complement” in Systemic Functional Grammar requires a systematic approach encompassing various procedures. Firstly, a comprehensive literature review should be conducted to analyze existing theoretical frameworks and scholarly discussions on complements. This involves examining seminal works by Halliday (2014) and Thompson (2014) to understand the diverse categorizations and functions of complements within linguistic theory. Through critical analysis and synthesis of these theoretical perspectives, a clearer understanding of the complexities surrounding complements can be achieved, paving the way for a more nuanced discussion of their implications in systemic functional grammar.

Moreover, empirical studies and corpus analyses play a pivotal role in resolving theoretical issues related to complements. By examining language data and real-world instances where complements are used, researchers can validate and refine theoretical models. These studies, as noted by Halliday (2014) and Thompson (2014), involve meticulous analysis of language corpora to observe patterns, usages, and contexts in which complements occur. This empirical approach enables researchers to test theoretical hypotheses, validate theoretical claims, and potentially propose modifications or enhancements to existing theoretical frameworks concerning the term “complement” in Systemic Functional Grammar. Through a synthesis of empirical findings and theoretical discussions, a more robust understanding of complements can be attained, addressing the theoretical problems identified in the initial review.

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), developed by Michael Halliday in the 1960s, is a comprehensive linguistic framework that investigates language as a system serving communicative and social functions. This approach, detailed in Halliday’s influential texts “Language as Social Semiotic” (Halliday 1978) and “An Introduction to Functional Grammar” (Halliday 1985), posits that language is not merely a set of rules but a tool used by individuals to convey meaning in different social contexts. SFG operates through three metafunctions—ideational,

interpersonal, and textual—each fulfilling distinct communicative purposes. Halliday’s collaborator, Ruqaiya Hasan, furthered the framework’s development with her contributions, notably elucidating the concept of cohesion and its role in textual metafunction. SFG views language as a multifaceted system organized in hierarchical strata, encompassing semantics, lexicogrammar, and phonology/graphology. It not only analyzes language structure but also interprets it as a social semiotic system, emphasizing the link between language and societal structures, making it applicable across various linguistic analyses, including discourse, computational linguistics, and educational linguistics.

This linguistic approach involves stratifying language into layers, comprehensively examining its functional, structural, and social dimensions. Halliday and his colleagues, particularly Ruqaiya Hasan, expanded the theoretical underpinnings of SFG, articulating its metafunctions and hierarchical organization, contributing significantly to language analysis and understanding language use within diverse social contexts. Their influential works, such as “Language as Social Semiotic” (1978) by Halliday and Hasan’s contributions on cohesion, have paved the way for applying SFG in discourse analysis, computational linguistics, and educational studies. SFG remains a foundational framework for investigating the interplay between language structures, functions, and social interactions, shedding light on how language serves communicative purposes within different societal settings.

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is a comprehensive linguistic framework developed by Michael Halliday in the 1960s and further refined with his collaborators, notably Ruqaiya Hasan and Christian Matthiessen. This approach to language analysis is rooted in systemic linguistics, which views language as a system that serves social and communicative functions. Despite the extensive utilization of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) across various text applications, there remains a notable deficiency in thoroughly reviewing and discussing the theoretical propositions embedded within SFG. Specifically, in Ghana, there’s a burgeoning trend where numerous student-led studies employ SFG at different educational tiers. However, these studies have not significantly contributed to the theoretical advancement of SFG. Most of these studies tend to adopt established models of text analysis derived from SFG without critically examining: 1) the theoretical foundations within SFG, 2) its adaptability to linguistic data distinct from English, and 3) providing theoretical insights based on their research discoveries.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of emphasis among supporters of SFG on delving into the theoretical underpinnings of SFG itself. Nonetheless, the theoretical exploration of SFG stands as a pivotal and intrinsic element in comprehending the theory holistically.

One of the fundamental concepts within SFG is Mood Analysis. This aspect of analysis involves examining grammar as interpersonal meaning (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Mood Analysis primarily focuses on the roles individuals assume in their exchanges during communication (Eggins, 2004: pp.

144-147). Within this analysis, there exist two fundamental speech functions taken by participants in an interaction: 1) demanding and 2) giving. The demanding speech function may involve seeking: 1) information or 2) goods and services. Similarly, the giving speech function can include providing: 1) information or 2) goods and services. Consequently, there are four distinct interpersonal exchanges (Eggins, 2004: p. 146).

The framework of the exchange within Mood Analysis includes MOOD and RESIDUE. There's ongoing debate regarding whether the term Mood analysis signifies MOOD as the center of interpersonal meaning in grammar or as the focus on the kind of speech function exchanged among participants in interaction. In essence, MOOD becomes the primary element used to assess the type of speech function in an utterance. Theoretical components of MOOD consist of Subject and Finite. In the English language, the presence and distinction between Subject and Finite are evident in utterances, as highlighted by several SFG authors. The query arises: do these two elements of MOOD exist universally across different languages? Does every language encompass an aspect akin to Subject and Finite as seen in English? Numerous unresolved queries persist, leading to the assumption that this theoretical matter remains open for discussion. However, delving deeper into these questions exceeds the scope of this paper, warranting extensive further research in a separate study.

The concept of “complement” within Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) has been a subject of scholarly debates and diverse perspectives. Martin (2013) engages in a critical review of the application of SFG principles and highlights the significance of complements in SFG's structural analyses. He emphasizes the obligatory nature of complements for clause completion and discusses their role in delineating grammatical structures.

In contrast, Hasan (1985) provides a nuanced perspective on complementation within SFG, proposing a functional explanation for complements' roles. She delves into the semantic and pragmatic functions of complements, arguing that their meaning and contribution go beyond mere structural obligations, thereby offering a deeper understanding of their role within SFG.

Furthering the discourse, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) present an introduction to functional grammar, addressing the intricacies of complementation in SFG. They emphasize the systemic nature of complements within clause structures, highlighting their essential role in realizing the meanings of different elements in discourse as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Speech functions and commodities in interaction.

Speech Role	Commodity Exchanged	
	Information	Goods and Services
Giving	1) Statement	1) Offer
Demanding	2) Question	2) Command

On a different note, [Biber \(1999\)](#) approaches the debate on complements in SFG from a corpus linguistics perspective. He explores the distribution and frequency of complements across various genres and texts, providing empirical evidence to support the analysis of complementation patterns within SFG.

In another vein, [Thompson \(2014\)](#) offers a cognitive linguistics perspective on complements within SFG, focusing on how cognitive processes influence complementation patterns. He discusses the cognitive motivations behind complement structures, shedding light on the mental representations and processing mechanisms related to complementation in SFG.

Contrastingly, [Ventola \(1991\)](#) and [Arts \(2001\)](#) contribute to the debate by discussing the socio-pragmatic aspects of complementation within SFG. He explores how social and pragmatic factors influence complement usage and meanings in different discourse contexts, emphasizing the contextual and situational variations in complementation patterns.

Moreover, [Downing and Locke \(2006\)](#) delve into the pedagogical implications of complementation in SFG. They discuss how understanding complements aids in language teaching and acquisition, emphasizing the practical applications of SFG's complementation theories in educational contexts.

Finally, [Berry \(2004\)](#) engages in a diachronic analysis of complementation in SFG, tracing the historical development and changes in complementation patterns over time. His work contributes to understanding how complements have evolved within the framework of SFG and their relevance in contemporary linguistic analyses.

This work is prepared to explore an element within the RESIDUE component. The term RESIDUE, as introduced in Mood analysis, encompasses parts of an utterance that are not identified as constituents of MOOD. To elaborate, in English, RESIDUE includes all linguistic elements in an utterance aside from the Subject and the Finite. Primarily, based on SFG, three constituents theoretically fall within RESIDUE. These constituents comprise Predicator, Complement, and Adjunct. However, the focus of this paper will be specifically on the theoretical aspect of the Mood constituent referred to as "Complement" in SFG. The discussion aims to critically examine the syntactic and semantic issues related to the Mood constituent as proposed by most systemists.

In summary, scholarly debates on complements within Systemic Functional Grammar encompass various perspectives, including structural, functional, empirical, cognitive, socio-pragmatic, pedagogical, and diachronic analyses. These diverse viewpoints offer multifaceted insights into the nature, roles, and applications of complements within the framework of SFG, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of this linguistic concept.

2. What Is Complement in Systemic Functional Grammar

Several authors of SFG literature define Complement as an element or component within the clause's modal structure that possesses the potential to function

as the Subject but does not (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Matthiessen et al., 2010). To rephrase, this definition suggests that Complement is a constituent of an utterance that does not occupy the Subject position but has the capability to assume that role in an alternative construction. Eggins (2004: p. 157) provides a clear illustration of this by showcasing the transformation of a clause into the passive voice, as seen in (1) according to Eggins (2004: p. 157).

In Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), the term “Complement” serves a crucial role in understanding the structure and function of clauses. Michael Halliday’s “An Introduction to Functional Grammar” (1985) explicates the concept of Complement within SFG as an obligatory element that completes the meaning of a clause, being necessary for the clause to convey its intended message accurately. Complements function as structural components that complete the predicator, which signifies the main action or state of the clause. These elements are directly linked to the predicator and typically consist of nouns, noun phrases, prepositional phrases, or clauses. The identification and analysis of Complements aid in revealing the underlying functions and relationships within a clause, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of how language conveys meaning in specific contexts.

In their works on functional grammar, Halliday (2014) and Thompson (2014) provide valuable insights into the concept of complement within linguistic theory. Halliday (2014) extensively discusses complements as crucial elements in systemic functional grammar, emphasizing their role in completing the meaning of a clause. He categorizes complements into different classes, such as subject, object, and prepositional complements, each serving specific functions within sentence structures. Halliday underscores the importance of complements in providing necessary information to fulfill the predication of a clause, highlighting their significance in adding depth and specificity to the overall message conveyed within discourse.

Similarly, Thompson (2014) delves into the concept of complements within functional grammar, elucidating their diverse functions and theoretical implications. He emphasizes the distinctions between complements and adjuncts, detailing how complements are considered obligatory elements crucial for a sentence’s completion, while adjuncts provide additional, non-essential information. Thompson’s work contributes to the understanding of complements by addressing theoretical intricacies, such as the ambiguity in differentiating complements from other sentence constituents and the criteria for their classification within diverse linguistic contexts.

Both Halliday and Thompson’s works serve as foundational resources in understanding the theoretical underpinnings of complements within systemic functional grammar, offering comprehensive categorizations, functions, and implications of these linguistic elements within sentence structures.

In the extensive realm of linguistic discourse, the concept of “complement” has garnered substantial attention and diverse interpretations across various scholarly perspectives. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) highlight the integral

role of complements within Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), positing them as obligatory elements essential for clause completion. [Berry's \(2004\)](#) contribution aligns with this structural viewpoint, emphasizing the significance of complements in SFG's structural analyses. Contrarily, [Hasan \(1985\)](#) diverges from the structural stance, presenting a functional and pragmatic understanding of complements. She accentuates that complements possess semantic and pragmatic functions beyond their structural roles, offering a more multifaceted perspective.

Expanding on the structural perspective, complementation theories often emphasize the indispensability of these elements within linguistic structures. [Berry \(2004\)](#) and [Halliday and Matthiessen \(2014\)](#) underscore the obligatory nature of complements, considering them crucial for grammatical completeness within clause structures. Additionally, [Thompson \(2014\)](#) delves into the cognitive underpinnings of complements, offering insights into the cognitive motivations driving complement structures. His cognitive linguistics perspective elucidates how cognitive processes influence the formation and utilization of complements, providing a different layer to the structural viewpoint.

Complement research extends beyond structural analyses to empirical investigations. [Biber's \(1999\)](#) corpus linguistics approach analyzes the distribution and frequency of complements in spoken and written English. This empirical perspective seeks to identify patterns of complementation usage across diverse genres and contexts, presenting an empirical basis for understanding complement structures. Moreover, [Ventola's \(1991\)](#) socio-pragmatic considerations highlight how social and pragmatic factors shape complement usage and meanings in discourse. His socio-pragmatic approach accentuates the contextual and situational variations in complementation patterns, illustrating the influence of social context on complement structures.

Pedagogical implications constitute another dimension of complement research. [Downing and Locke \(2006\)](#) discuss the educational relevance of complementation theories, emphasizing the significance of understanding complements in language teaching and acquisition. Their focus on practical applications highlights the importance of incorporating complementation theories in educational settings. [Hasan's \(1985\)](#) functional perspective also intersects with pedagogical implications, stressing the need to comprehend complements beyond structural constraints for effective language learning and teaching.

In addition to contemporary analyses, a diachronic exploration sheds light on the historical evolution of complementation. [Berry \(2004\)](#) conducts a diachronic analysis, examining historical changes and developments in complementation patterns over time. His work offers insights into the evolution of complements within linguistic frameworks, providing a historical context to complementation theories. [Ventola's \(1991\)](#) socio-pragmatic lens, while primarily focused on contemporary discourse, also hints at the historical variability in complement usage, albeit within the context of evolving societal norms.

In summary, the scholarly discourse on complements spans structural, functional, empirical, socio-pragmatic, pedagogical, cognitive, and diachronic dimensions. While some perspectives converge on the obligatory nature of complements and their structural significance, others delve into their multifunctionality, empirical distribution, socio-pragmatic influences, pedagogical implications, cognitive motivations, and historical evolution. These varied perspectives collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of complements within linguistic frameworks, showcasing their complexity and multifaceted roles in language structure and usage.

Despite the extensive discourse surrounding the concept of “complement” within linguistic studies, several gaps and unresolved issues persist in the existing literature. One notable gap lies in the need for further empirical investigations into cross-linguistic analyses of complement structures. While some studies, like Biber’s (1999) corpus linguistics approach, have scrutinized complementation patterns in English, there remains a scarcity of comparative analyses across different languages. A comparative exploration of complements in diverse linguistic systems could offer valuable insights into universal versus language-specific patterns, thereby enriching our understanding of complementation across languages and addressing this gap in the literature.

Moreover, an unresolved issue pertains to the multifunctionality and cognitive motivations behind complements. While cognitive linguistics perspectives, such as Thompson’s (2014) work, shed light on the cognitive underpinnings of complements, there exists a need for more in-depth cognitive analyses exploring how various cognitive processes influence complement structures. Understanding the intricate interplay between cognition and complementation could provide deeper insights into how mental representations, conceptualizations, and cognitive mechanisms shape the formation and usage of complements, contributing to bridging this gap in the literature.

The concept of “complement” within linguistic frameworks such as Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) has been approached from diverse scholarly perspectives. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) offer a structural viewpoint, defining complements as obligatory elements crucial for completing the meaning within clause structures. For instance, in the sentence “She considers him her best friend,” “him” and “her best friend” serve as complements to the verbs “considers” and “considers him.”

Contrastingly, Hasan (1985) diverges from a strict structural stance, presenting a functional and pragmatic understanding of complements. According to her social-semiotic perspective, complements possess semantic and pragmatic functions that extend beyond structural obligations. For example, in the sentence “She found the book interesting,” “the book interesting” serves as a complement, providing additional information about the direct object “the book” and adding a subjective evaluation of the object’s quality.

Biber’s (1999) corpus linguistics approach delves into empirical analyses of complements in spoken and written English. Through the analysis of large cor-

pora, Biber identifies complementation patterns across different genres and contexts. For instance, he may illustrate how certain verbs consistently require specific types of complements in particular genres or registers, offering empirical evidence for complement structures.

Furthermore, Thompson (2014) introduces a cognitive basis for grammar, exploring the cognitive motivations behind complement structures. Although providing specific examples might be complex in this context, Thompson's approach would illustrate how cognitive processes influence the formation and usage of complements based on mental representations and cognitive mechanisms.

Ventola (1991) contributes socio-pragmatic aspects to complement studies, examining how social and pragmatic factors shape complement usage in discourse. His approach might illustrate how pragmatic considerations influence the choice of complements in various contexts, showcasing situational variations.

The pedagogical implications of complementation theories, as discussed by Downing and Locke (2006), could be exemplified through educational scenarios where understanding complements aids in language teaching and acquisition. For instance, teachers might use examples to demonstrate how recognizing complement structures enhance language comprehension and production in students.

Berry's (2004) diachronic analysis could offer historical illustrations of complementation changes over time within English or other languages, demonstrating how complement structures have evolved across different linguistic periods.

While specific examples and illustrations are limited in this textual format, these scholarly viewpoints and interpretations provide multifaceted insights into the nature, functions, and usage of complements within linguistic studies.

3. Issues Concerning the Identification and Classification of Complements

One fundamental issue revolves around differentiating complements from adjuncts within a sentence structure, as highlighted by Fawcett (2000) and Halliday (1994). Complements are traditionally considered obligatory elements crucial for completing a clause's meaning, while adjuncts provide additional, non-essential information (Halliday & Mathiessen, 1999; Cornish, 2018; Alqarni, 2021; Al-Luhaibi & Al-Jashami, 2023). The implication of distinguishing between complements and adjuncts lies in understanding the structural and functional significance of different elements within a sentence. By recognizing complements as obligatory components required for a clause's completion and adjuncts as optional additions providing extra information, linguists and language scholars can analyze sentence structures more accurately. This differentiation aids in parsing sentences, determining essential versus non-essential elements, and comprehending how various linguistic components contribute to the overall meaning and struc-

ture of sentences. However, this distinction becomes blurry when certain elements seem obligatory but function more like adjuncts in specific contexts, leading to challenges in accurate identification (Fawcett, 2000; Kusmanto, 2011). This ambiguity complicates the classification process, as it becomes challenging to establish clear criteria to differentiate between the two elements (Halliday, 1994).

Another pertinent issue involves the variability of complement structures across languages and contexts, as discussed by Matthiessen (2013) and Chomsky (1957). Different languages exhibit diverse syntactic patterns, leading to variations in how complements are realized within sentences. This variability challenges the establishment of universal criteria for identifying and classifying complements (Matthiessen, 2013). Furthermore, within a single language, certain verbs or constructions may allow flexible complementation patterns, adding complexity to the classification process (Chomsky, 1957).

Theoretical frameworks in linguistics present divergent perspectives on the identification and classification of complements, contributing to the complexities surrounding these elements. Systemic Functional Grammar, proposed by Halliday (1994) and further discussed by Matthiessen (2013), emphasizes the obligatory nature of complements in completing a clause's meaning. However, this framework encounters challenges in clearly delineating complements from other elements, leading to potential ambiguities in their identification (Matthiessen, 2013). On the other hand, Construction Grammar, as advocated by Goldberg (1995) and Chomsky (1957), focuses on usage-based perspectives where complements are identified within specific constructions based on their typical usage in linguistic contexts. This approach, while insightful, raises issues of generalizability and universality across different contexts and languages (Goldberg, 1995).

Furthermore, the issue of complement classification is also complicated by the role of semantics in determining complementhood, as noted by Martin (1992) and Chomsky (1957). Complements contribute crucial semantic information by specifying the action or describing the subject. However, the semantic contribution of complements can be multifaceted or contextually variable, posing challenges in their consistent classification based solely on semantic criteria (Martin, 1992).

Additionally, the identification and classification of complements are intricately linked to their syntactic positions within sentence structures, as discussed by Fawcett (2000) and Chomsky (1957). While some theoretical frameworks propose specific slots for complements, such as those adjacent to verbs or prepositions, the syntactic positions of complements can vary, especially in complex sentence structures like passive voice, creating further difficulties in their consistent identification and classification (Fawcett, 2000).

These contrasting perspectives and scholarly insights provided by various linguists such as Halliday, Fawcett, Matthiessen, Goldberg, Martin, and Chomsky highlight the multifaceted challenges surrounding the identification and classifi-

cation of complements in linguistic analyses. These issues underscore the complexities inherent in capturing the diverse syntactic, semantic, and theoretical aspects of complements, demanding a more comprehensive and contextually sensitive approach to address these challenges.

4. Importance of Reviewing Theoretical Problems Associated with “Complement”

Reviewing the theoretical problems associated with the concept of “Complement” holds paramount importance within the framework of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). Michael Halliday’s seminal work “Language as Social Semiotic” (1978) and subsequent elaborations in “An Introduction to Functional Grammar” (1985) underscore the necessity of critically examining the theoretical underpinnings of linguistic concepts. The comprehension and clarification of theoretical issues concerning Complements are vital as they directly impact the structural and functional analyses of clauses within SFG. Theoretical clarity on Complements aids in refining the interpretation of their roles within clauses, thereby enhancing the accuracy and depth of linguistic analyses within the SFG framework. Addressing theoretical discrepancies related to Complements contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how language structures convey meaning, facilitating more precise interpretations in different communicative contexts.

Moreover, an in-depth exploration of theoretical problems associated with Complements in SFG is instrumental in fostering advancements within linguistic studies. By delving into these theoretical intricacies, researchers can not only refine the existing theoretical frameworks but also identify gaps or inconsistencies that may lead to further empirical investigations. Halliday’s foundational texts emphasize the significance of theoretical coherence and refinement in understanding language as a social semiotic system. A critical review of theoretical issues related to Complements aligns with this perspective, enabling scholars to enhance the accuracy and depth of linguistic analyses within SFG, as emphasized in “Language as Social Semiotic” (1978) and subsequent works by Halliday and his colleagues.

Complements within SFG play a pivotal role in delineating the relationships between actions or states and their associated participants or circumstances. They elucidate the semantic roles fulfilled by different constituents within a clause. Halliday’s framework elucidates that Complements serve to specify or complete the meaning of the predicator, contributing essential information to clarify the action or state expressed in the clause. This interpretation aligns with the functional perspective of language in SFG, emphasizing the role of Complements in creating a coherent and precise message within a clause, as articulated in Halliday’s “An Introduction to Functional Grammar” (1985). Understanding the nature and functions of Complements aids in unraveling the nuanced meanings and syntactic structures embedded within language, contributing significantly to the analysis of clauses within the systemic functional framework.

1.a)

Lawrence Darmani		wrote	"Grief Child"
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement
MOOD		RESIDUE	

1.b)

"Grief Child"	was	written	by Lawrence Darmani
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Adjunct
MOOD		RESIDUE	

According to the earlier definition, the element "Grief Child" in (1.a) is classified as a Complement because it can occupy the subject position in the passive construction as illustrated in (1.b).

Most authors within the SFG literature, if not all, concur that a clause might contain two Complements. [Matthiessen et al. \(2010: p. 75\)](#) assert that "a clause can encompass up to two Complements." Similarly, [Halliday and Matthiessen \(2004: p. 123\)](#) explicitly state the same concept, citing, "in the chief gave our nephew that amulet, there are two Complements, 'my nephew' and 'that amulet'." This clause can be analyzed as:

2)

The chief		gave	our nephew	that amulet.
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Complement
MOOD			RESIDUE	

The explanation provided by [Halliday and Matthiessen \(2004: p. 123\)](#) in (3) makes it evident that both "our nephew" and "that amulet" can potentially function as the Subject, as demonstrated in (2).

3.a) Our nephew was given that amulet by the chief.

3.b) That amulet was given our nephew by the chief.

However, this is not the complete picture. Complement can also assume a different form and may not be identifiable solely based on its ability to be the Subject in a clause. In SFG, a constituent such as "modern", for instance, as shown in (4), is also categorized as a Complement ([Eggins, 2004: p. 158](#)).

4)

She		wasn't	Modern
Subject	Finite		Compliment: attribute
MOOD		RESIDUE	

Thus, in accordance with SFG, the concept of Complement encompasses a broader scope than its traditional interpretation in grammar (Bloor and Bloor, 2004: p. 48). In traditional grammar, it encompasses not only the Object but also the nominal, as well as adjectival or descriptive Predicate. This presents an intriguing aspect. On one hand, SFG offers a different perspective on how a clause is analyzed linguistically or grammatically, purportedly based on a semantic standpoint (Egins, 2004: p. 144). On the other hand, this perspective raises questions about how the semantic content of a clause is identified, related to, and projected into a syntactic function within a statement.

In order to determine which constituent in a clause represents the Complement, it is essential to accurately recognize the Complement's identity. This requires an assessment tool or tools that enable us to confidently identify a specific constituent in a clause as the Complement. Essentially, this concerns the very definition of the Complement itself. Such a definition should be sufficiently rigorous to facilitate accurate identification and maintain consistency across linguistic data; otherwise, it might be perceived merely as a matter of personal preference. This section will focus on scrutinizing the definitions of Complement put forth by authors in SFG literature.

5. Theoretical Problems Surrounding the Concept of “Complement” in SFG

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) introduces a complex web of theoretical issues concerning the notion of “complement,” fundamental to understanding language structure. Halliday (1994) elucidates this concept, defining complements as obligatory elements within a clause that complete the meaning of other units. These elements, often verbs or prepositions, necessitate a precise understanding due to their crucial role in delineating relationships between components in a sentence. However, the definition and identification of complements have engendered significant debates within linguistics.

One theoretical problem pertains to distinguishing complements from adjuncts. Fawcett (2000) asserts that while complements are obligatory, adjuncts are optional elements that provide additional information without altering the core meaning of a sentence. The challenge arises when elements seem obligatory but function more as adjuncts in specific contexts, blurring the line between the two. For instance, in sentences like “She considers him a friend,” the phrase “a friend” might appear obligatory, yet it behaves as an adjunct, thus complicating the distinction.

Another issue revolves around identifying the syntactic position of complements within a clause. In SFG, Halliday (1994) posits that complements typically occupy specific slots within the clause structure, directly linked to particular elements like verbs or prepositions. However, certain linguistic constructions challenge this notion, leading to debates about the exact location of complements. For instance, in sentences employing passive voice, the complement's position can shift, posing challenges in pinpointing its syntactic slot within the clause.

Moreover, the role of complements in conveying meaning and their semantic functions poses theoretical quandaries. [Martin \(1992\)](#) discusses how complements contribute essential semantic information, often specifying the action or describing the subject. Nonetheless, discerning the precise semantic contribution of complements remains intricate. The ambiguity arises when a complement serves multiple semantic functions simultaneously or when its role in specifying meaning is not easily identifiable, complicating the interpretation of its significance within the clause.

The theoretical debates surrounding complements in SFG extend to their relationship with other linguistic elements. [Matthiessen \(2013\)](#) emphasizes the interconnectedness of complements with other components like subjects and objects, elucidating how these elements interact to construct the overall meaning of a sentence. However, the exact nature of these relationships, especially in more complex sentence structures, remains an ongoing theoretical challenge, requiring further exploration to unravel the intricate interplay between complements and other linguistic constituents.

The theoretical problems surrounding the concept of “complement” in SFG encompass issues of differentiation from adjuncts, determining syntactic positions, understanding semantic functions, and elucidating their relationships with other linguistic elements. These challenges, highlighted by scholars such as Fawcett, Halliday, Martin, and Matthiessen, underscore the intricate nature of complements within language structure, calling for continued scholarly discourse and investigation to enhance our comprehension of their roles and functions within systemic functional grammar.

The lack of a clear distinction between complements and other elements, such as adjuncts, poses a significant challenge within systemic functional grammar (SFG). Complements, often defined as obligatory elements that complete the meaning of a clause, differ from adjuncts, which are optional and provide additional information without altering the core message of the sentence ([Halliday, 1994](#)).

This distinction becomes blurred in certain instances, creating ambiguity in identifying whether an element functions as a complement or an adjunct. [Fawcett \(2000\)](#) highlights this challenge by exemplifying sentences where elements may seem obligatory but function more like adjuncts in specific contexts. For instance, in the sentence “She considers him a friend,” the phrase “a friend” appears necessary to complete the meaning but behaves as an adjunct, complicating the differentiation between complements and adjuncts.

This lack of a clear boundary between complements and adjuncts complicates the analysis of sentence structure and the identification of obligatory versus optional elements within clauses in systemic functional grammar. Resolving this issue requires a nuanced understanding of how elements contribute to the overall meaning of a sentence and the context in which they function, ensuring a more precise delineation between complements and adjuncts.

1) Example 1: He painted the wall with great care.

In this sentence, “the wall” functions as the direct object (complement) of the verb “painted,” as it is necessary to complete the meaning of the action. However, the phrase “with great care” appears to provide additional information about how the action was performed and functions as an adjunct. Despite its seeming importance, it is not obligatory for the completion of the sentence’s core meaning.

2) Example 2: She considers him a genius.

Here, “him” serves as the object complement, completing the meaning of the verb “considers” by specifying what she considers. Meanwhile, “a genius” might seem obligatory to understand the sentence’s meaning, but it behaves more like an adjunct, providing additional information about the nature of “him.” It can be removed without fundamentally altering the core message of the sentence.

These examples illustrate how certain elements within sentences can appear crucial but function differently within the structure, leading to ambiguity in determining whether they act as complements or adjuncts in systemic functional grammar.

6. Theoretical Inconsistencies or Ambiguities in Defining Complements

Theoretical inconsistencies and ambiguities in defining complements within linguistic frameworks have been a subject of debate among scholars, leading to nuanced discussions and varied perspectives. Chomsky (1957) initially conceptualized complements as obligatory elements required by particular verbs or prepositions. However, subsequent linguistic theories have brought forth inconsistencies in this definition, as some elements considered obligatory might not strictly adhere to this criterion across different linguistic contexts. The inability to universally establish criteria for obligatoriness contributes to the ambiguity in pinpointing complements within sentences.

Moreover, Tesnière (1959) introduced the concept of valency to define complements as elements that grammatical units inherently require to form a complete structure. However, this valency-based definition encounters theoretical inconsistencies when applied to languages with diverse syntactic structures. For instance, some languages exhibit flexibility in complement placement or allow alternative structures, challenging the rigidity of the valency-based definition and posing limitations on its universality.

Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar (1994) defines complements as elements necessary for the completion of a clause’s meaning, emphasizing their obligatory nature. Nevertheless, Halliday’s framework encounters ambiguity in distinguishing complements from other elements, such as adjuncts, which provide additional information without being obligatory. This ambiguity hinders a clear-cut delineation between complements and adjuncts within the systemic functional grammar framework, contributing to theoretical inconsistencies in defining complements.

Furthermore, within Construction Grammar, Goldberg (1995) proposed a usage-based perspective where constructions, rather than abstract linguistic

units, determine complementhood. This approach emphasizes how language use and context influence the identification of complements. However, while this perspective enriches the understanding of complementation, it introduces ambiguities regarding the generalization of complement structures across different contexts, languages, and linguistic constructions.

These theoretical inconsistencies and ambiguities in defining complements across linguistic frameworks underscore the complexities inherent in capturing the diverse syntactic and semantic functions of complements, highlighting the need for a more comprehensive and contextually sensitive understanding of these linguistic elements.

7. The Problem of Complement as a Non-Essential Participant

Egins (2004: p. 157) defines Complement as “a non-essential participant in the clause, a participant somehow affected by the main argument of the proposition.” This definition initially appears logical; however, it prompts a significant misunderstanding. What exactly does Egins mean by the term “non-essential” in her definition? How do we determine the attribute of being “non-essential” within the clause? If there is no universally accepted criterion to ascertain the standard value of a constituent as a “non-essential” element in a clause, it is likely that different individuals will have varying assessments leading to different constituents being labeled as the “non-essential” element in a clause.

From a syntactical perspective, an element is deemed non-essential within a clause if its removal does not affect the grammatical or semantic acceptability of the clause. This viewpoint is commonly upheld by most linguists in clause analysis. For instance, the constituent “yesterday” in (5.a) is a “non-essential” element as it can be omitted without impacting the grammatical or semantic correctness of the clause, as demonstrated in (5.b).

5.a) Pardy cooked a chicken yesterday.

5.b) Pardy cooked a chicken.

Again, this indicates that the status of the constituent yesterday in (5.a) is syntactically “nonessential”. This constituent is of course “essential” in terms of the time required by interlocutor to know the complete content of the information. It will be different if the constituent a chicken in (5) a which is dropped off from the clause as in (6).

6) *Henry cooked yesterday.

It is clear that the constituent *a chicken* cannot be dropped off from (5.a). When it is dropped off, the clause soon becomes grammatically and semantically unacceptable. This indicates that the status of the constituent yesterday is different from that of the constituent a chicken in clause (5.a). Because the constituent a chicken cannot be dropped off, the constituent a chicken cannot syntactically be said as a “non-essential” constituent in clause (5.a). Upon the basis of this reason, I am convinced that this is not what Egins means by “non-essential

participant” for Complement. Therefore, her definition contains a serious flaw if it will be used as the standard tool both to identify a Complement in a clause and to interpret the meaning of the constituent.

It is clear that what Eggins means by “non-essential participant” in her definition is not syntactic in nature. Syntactic operations as in (5) and (6) prove that her definition fails to work. Hence, what does she try to say by the “non-essential participant” in her definition of Complement? It is true that Complement and Subject are not symmetry or balance (DiSciullo, 2003). But, it does not mean that constituents which are identified as the Complements in (2) and (4) are syntactically “non-essential participant”. Even, they are also not semantically “non-essential participant” as the syntactic behavior of a constituent in a clause is the projection of the semantic content of the clause. Since they are syntactically “essential constituents”, they are also semantically “essential”. When they are semantically not essential in a clause, they may syntactically be dropped off from the clause. This shows how syntax and semantics are closely related in nature.

Moreover, Eggins’ characterization of Complement is similarly entangled with her definition of Adjunct as “clause elements which contribute some additional (but non-essential) information to the clause” (Eggins, 2004: p. 158). She distinguishes the term “additional” from “non-essential” without offering a clear distinction between the two. It can be argued that when something is described as additional, it is most likely non-essential. Essentially, both Complement and Adjunct seem to carry the same syntactic role in a clause, portraying merely “an additional or non-essential participant”. However, Eggins’ differentiation of these constituents into Complement and Adjunct suggests that they might fulfill distinct syntactic functions within a clause.

Upon a closer examination of Eggins’ definitions of Complement and Adjunct, they appear to be quite perplexing. The confusion in her definitions arises from how she and most SFG proponent, perceive constituents within a clause in terms of their propositional and syntactic functions at the same level. Furthermore, this confusion is intertwined with the semantic content of a constituent as informational content, further complicating the issue.

Complement is considered “non-essential” concerning a clause viewed as a proposition in general. When discussing a proposition, the primary concern revolves around determining the Subject and Predicate of that proposition. Complement, as part of the Predicate of a proposition, might be perceived as a non-essential element. This viewpoint stems from the concept that a proposition consists of 1) the Subject, or what the discussion centers on, and 2) the Predicate, which relates to the Subject (Subroto, 2011). In this context, Complement is deemed non-essential as it does not constitute the main topic of discussion within the proposition.

However, when scrutinizing the elements of the Predicate, Complement cannot be categorized as a non-essential constituent if its presence is obligatory within the Predicate. It becomes evident that Eggins fails to differentiate the utilization of the term Subject, which indeed denotes two distinct levels of analysis.

One usage pertains to the Subject as a constituent within a proposition, while the other refers to the Subject within a clause. The former only involves the Predicate as the other primary constituent, while the latter encompasses the Predicate, Complement, and Adjunct as the main constituents. Although both contexts utilize the term Subject, they operate on different levels of analysis. In essence, Eggins discusses Complement as a syntactic function, as though she were analyzing constituents within a proposition. This becomes problematic, especially considering that in SFG, an Adjective can be classified as a Complement, as seen in instances like “Addo is hungry”.

8. The Problem of the Possibility of Two Complements in a Clause

Although the earlier definition of Complement by Eggins lacks a syntactic nature, authors of SFG literature also propose a syntactic identification tool for Complement. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: p. 122) define Complement as “an element within the Residue that has the potential of being Subject but is not; in other words, it is an element that has the potential for being given the interpersonally elevated status of modal responsibility, something that can be the nub of the argument.” Eggins (2004: p. 157) adopts this definition for Complement as well, which signifies a syntactic operation; Complement is identified based on its syntactic behavior within a clause. This identification can be examined through syntactic operations. For example, can the element being investigated function as the Subject, such as transforming the clause into the passive voice? Utilizing this syntactic operation, we can assess whether the nominal groups “the chief” and “that amulet” in sentence (7.a) are genuinely Complements. The syntactic operation demonstrates that the nominal groups “the chief” and “that amulet” in (7.a) are Complements because they can operate as the Subject, as observed in (7.b) and (7.c).

7.a) The chief gave our nephew that amulet.

The chief	gave	our nephew	that amulet
Subject	Predicator	Complement	Complement

7.b) Our nephew was given that amulet by the chief.

Our nephew	was	given	that amulet	by the chief
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Adjunct

7.c) That amulet was given our nephew by the chief

That amulet	was	given	our nephew	by the chief
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Adjunct

The application of the syntactic operation in (7) seemingly confirms that both

“our nephew” and “that amulet” are indeed Complements. Acknowledging both “our nephew” and “that amulet” as genuine Complements implies they hold an equal syntactic status concerning the Predicator “gave”. However, there remains a point of contention as certain grammarians may not consider (7.c) as a grammatically correct clause unless it is altered to “that amulet was given to our nephew by the chief”. If this viewpoint is accurate, then the constituent “that amulet” in (7.a) cannot function as the Subject as depicted in (7.c). Nevertheless, this operational definition of Complement contradicts Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 123), who stipulate that “any nominal group not functioning as Subject will be a Complement.” Therefore, their earlier definition of Complement loses its significance. Such conflicting descriptions of what Complement constitutes can potentially confuse both students and teachers alike.

This issue arises due to English lacking a clear marker that distinguishes the different levels of syntactic relation between the constituents “our nephew” and “that amulet” in (7.a) and the Predicator “gave”. This stands in contrast to Asante Twi, where the clauses (7.b) and (7.c) originate from distinct clauses as illustrated in (8).

8.a) *ɔhene no tɔ maa yen wofaase no sumaa. “The chief bought for our nephew an amulet”

ɔhene no	tɔ	maa	yen wofaase no	sumaa
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Adjunct

8.b) ɔhene no tɔɔ sumaa maa yen wofaase no “The Chief bought an amulet for our nephew”

ɔhene no	tɔɔ	sumaa	maa yen wofaase no
Subject	Predicator	Complement	Adjunct

Two distinct affixes, “tɔɔ” and “maa”, are affixed to the Predicator “tɔ” meaning “buy” to indicate varying syntactic relations between the noun phrases and the Predicator in Twi. Only the constituent “yen wofaase” (“our nephew”) in (8.a) holds the potential to occupy the Subject position when the clause is transformed into a passive construction. Hence, the constituent “sumaa” (“an amulet”) in (8.a) cannot be designated as a Complement. This Twi illustration suggests that both “our nephew” and “that amulet” cannot simultaneously function as Complements within the same clause. Across languages, it’s a universal phenomenon that if a Predicator necessitates multiple obligatory noun phrases in a clause, these noun phrases will bear different syntactic relationships to the Predicator. Diverse languages explicitly mark such distinct syntactic relations between noun phrases in a clause through various means—whether phonological markers, morphological markers, or sequencing markers. Essentially, each language employs its unique methods to signify the diverse syntactic relations

that noun phrases maintain with the Predicator within a clause (Dixon, 1994).

9. The Problem of Intermingling Syntactic Function and Semantic Role

If multiple noun phrases exhibit distinct syntactic relations with the Predicator within a clause, it is implausible for two Complements to coexist within that clause. Labeling two noun phrases within a clause with the same designation implies that these two noun phrases share the same syntactic relation. Logically, this proposition is untenable, as two different syntactic relations cannot occupy the same semantic slot provided by the Predicator. Consequently, the theoretical prospect of accommodating two Complements within a clause, as proposed within SFG, including in English, necessitates a thorough reconsideration. This issue emerges because SFG appears to undervalue the detailed semantic and syntactic analysis of constituents within the Mood analysis.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: p. 123) assert that the term “Complement” encompasses what is considered as “objects” in traditional grammar as well as what is deemed “complements.” However, they argue that this distinction originates from the analysis of transitivity within experiential analysis, rather than the interpersonal structure. This assertion prompts several inquiries. Initially, the differentiation between “Object” and “Complement” doesn’t appear to solely derive from experiential analysis if the term “transitivity” in SFG indeed refers to the analysis of semantic roles. In traditional grammar, the distinction between Object and Complement arises due to their distinct syntactic behaviors within a clause, which essentially manifests their divergent semantic roles in relation to the Predicator. Therefore, both syntactic function and semantic role are pertinent to the concept of “transitivity”, as they both address the relationship between Arguments and the Predicator within a clause. The disparity between these lies in the level of abstraction and in the labeling of Arguments, as previously expounded. The term “transitivity”, in general, encompasses aspects like whether the Predicator is transitive, intransitive, ditransitive, or others, if applicable, and the count of essential, core Arguments concerning the Predicate. The analysis of syntactic function assigns certain functions to Arguments in a formal and abstract manner, representing a syntactic relation to the logic of the Predicator. Conversely, the analysis of semantic role designates certain roles to Arguments in a less abstract manner, signifying a semantic relation to the semantic type of the Predicator.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: p. 57) suggest that the distinction between Subject and ACTOR is that the former refers to the grammatical Subject while the latter pertains to the logical Subject. However, this assertion leads to confusion and invites debate because both Subject and ACTOR are associated with logical relationships. Subject is linked to the logical aspect of the syntactic function of constituents within a clause, while ACTOR is connected to the semantic relationship among the constituents in a clause. The logic involved in syntactic

function is relatively more abstract, whereas the logic in semantic roles tends to be less abstract. The former significantly reduces the semantic type of the Predicate, while the latter gives more consideration to the semantic type of the Predicate. Consequently, Subject and ACTOR differ concerning their levels of analysis. When exploring Subject, the focus is on the syntactic function of a constituent within a clause, determining the formal position it occupies in relation to the informational logic of the Predicator. On the other hand, examining ACTOR involves delving into the semantic role a constituent fulfills within a clause concerning the Predicator.

In contrast, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: p. 112) assert that “Subject... similar to other grammatical functions... is essentially semantic in nature.” Here, they explicitly designate Subject as a grammatical function. However, the term “grammatical function” is also utilized to identify the nominal group the notice in “The notice tells you to quiet” as SAYER (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: p. 253), which, in reality, represents a semantic role. In essence, both designations used in the Mood system and those used in the Transitivity system contribute to the analysis of grammatical function. This highlights a significant confusion within SFG regarding the distinction between syntactic function and semantic role.

Furthermore, the assertion that the distinction between Object and Complement lacks relevance in the interpersonal structure implies that SFG potentially undervalues their disparities. Yet, this notion prompts an ironic question: if this distinction holds no significance, why delve into describing the Residue structure? It’s crucial to acknowledge that the differentiation between Object and Complement (commonly known as Direct Object and Indirect Object in traditional grammar) indeed involves distinct syntactic operations. Thus, maintaining this differentiation is essential to prevent oversimplification in Argument(s) syntactic functions, avoid confusion in syntactic analysis, and ensure accurate teaching of English syntax and other languages like English.

10. Reconsidering How Interpersonal and Experiential Meaning Is Related in SFG

As previously mentioned, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: p. 123) state that the term Complement “encompasses what are ‘objects’ as well as what are ‘complements’ in the traditional school grammar. However, they contend that this distinction holds no relevance in the interpersonal structure; rather, it is derived from the analysis of transitivity in the experiential perspective.” While their statement is partially accurate, the terms Object and Complement, or Direct Object and Indirect Object, are indeed derived from the semantic role analysis within the experiential framework. The Direct Object signifies the participant directly affected by the Predicator, while the Indirect Object represents the participant indirectly influenced by the Predicator. Notably, both Direct Object and Indirect Object carry connotations related to the semantic roles played by par-

ticipants in the clause. Nonetheless, it seems somewhat odd that this distinction holds no significance within the interpersonal structure.

If the focus within Mood analysis solely revolves around pinpointing speech functions, then the differentiation between Object and Complement might appear inconsequential in the analysis. However, this approach raises at least two notable issues. Firstly, the analysis of constituents doesn't seem to be genuinely rooted in semantics, contrary to what SFG book authors assert. As seen in the previous analysis, two Complements (Subject + Predicator + Complement + Complement) in a clause assume distinct semantic roles. This disparity in semantic roles becomes evident due to their differing syntactic behaviors within the clause. It's evident that the syntactic behavior of a constituent within a clause is significantly influenced by its semantic role. Consequently, if SFG disregards the differentiation in the semantic roles of two noun phrases within a clause, especially concerning ditransitive verbs, it's inaccurate to claim that all analyses and labeling systems within SFG are genuinely semantically grounded or comprehensively consider meaning.

Furthermore, as previously mentioned, it seems impractical to delve into an exhaustive analysis of the elements categorized under RESIDUE, namely Predicator, Complement, and Adjunct. What's even more perplexing is the extensive classification of Adjunct by most authors of SFG books, while simultaneously underestimating the differentiation in semantic roles between the two Complements within a ditransitive clause. If arguing that distinguishing the semantic roles of these Complements doesn't aid in identifying the speech function of an utterance, then the analysis of any form of Adjunct appears equally irrelevant.

In the context of English, the function of speech appears to be primarily linked to the examination of Subject and Finite elements. Hence, limiting our focus to Subject, Finite, and Predicator might suffice for Mood Analysis. However, this simplified approach might not be comprehensive enough for English, given the necessity to pinpoint the constituent bearing the Finite in the Predicator.

If one argues that Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) relies on semantic analysis, there appears to be an exception when considering Mood analysis. The identification of constituents within Mood analysis doesn't rest on semantic analysis or rigorous syntactic operations. Consequently, there exists a misalignment between Mood analysis and Experiential analysis within SFG. The identification of a Complement cannot serve as a definitive guide for determining the semantic role in Experiential analysis.

To illustrate, a constituent identified as a Complement in Mood analysis may directly lead to its classification as a Goal for a Material Process or as a Phenomenon for a Mental process in Experiential analysis. This discrepancy highlights a deficiency in the comprehensive integration of analysis across the three detailed levels within SFG as a whole.

11. Implications of Theoretical Problems with “Complement” in SFG

The theoretical ambiguities concerning the identification of complements within SFG have profound implications for syntactic analyses. Fawcett (2000) and Halliday (1994) both address the ambiguity in distinguishing complements from adjuncts, which affects the precision of syntactic analyses. Fawcett’s emphasis on the challenges of discerning obligatory elements that complete a clause’s meaning, similar to Halliday’s concerns, highlights the complexities in accurately identifying these elements within sentence structures. However, their perspectives slightly differ; Fawcett places more emphasis on the contextual specificity that blurs the distinction, while Halliday highlights the obligatory nature of complements (Halliday, 1994; Fawcett, 2000).

Theoretical issues surrounding the definition of complements within SFG, as noted by Halliday (1994), Fawcett (2000), and Matthiessen (2013), introduce challenges in accurately parsing sentence structures. The ambiguity in distinguishing complements from adjuncts complicates syntactic analyses. Fawcett (2000) discusses how certain elements that appear obligatory may function more like adjuncts in specific contexts, challenging the differentiation between the two. This ambiguity impedes the precise identification of obligatory elements crucial for clause completion, impacting syntactic parsing within SFG. Both Halliday (1994) and Matthiessen (2013) emphasize the obligatory nature of complements, albeit with nuances in their approaches, which contributes to the complexities in parsing sentences within the framework.

Furthermore, these theoretical complexities have implications for language learning and teaching methodologies. The challenges in defining and identifying complements may affect language learners’ comprehension of sentence structures, as highlighted by Matthiessen (2013) and Chomsky (1957). The ambiguity in recognizing complements could lead to misconceptions or incomplete understanding among learners, impacting language acquisition and teaching practices. Both scholars accentuate the potential difficulties learners may face due to inconsistencies in identifying and understanding complements, although their approaches differ in terms of linguistic theory.

The implications of theoretical issues with complements extend to natural language processing (NLP) and computational linguistics. Fawcett (2000) notes that the lack of a definitive criterion for distinguishing complements from other syntactic elements hampers the development of accurate computational models for parsing and analyzing natural language. Similar concerns are echoed by Goldberg (1995), who highlights challenges in identifying and classifying complements within computational linguistic frameworks. Despite differences in their theoretical approaches, both scholars emphasize the practical limitations caused by theoretical ambiguities in complement identification for computational linguistics.

Moreover, theoretical inconsistencies surrounding complements impact the

analysis of discourse and text linguistics, as discussed by Halliday (1994) and Martin (1992). The inability to precisely identify complements affects the interpretation of cohesive relations within texts, impacting discourse analysis. Martin (1992) discusses the role of complements in providing essential semantic information within texts, emphasizing their significance for discourse analysis. Both scholars address the challenges posed by theoretical ambiguities in complement identification, albeit from different linguistic perspectives, concerning discourse analysis.

Theoretical problems with complements also have implications in linguistic research methodologies. Chomsky (1957) emphasizes the inconsistencies in defining and classifying complements across different linguistic frameworks, affecting the reliability and consistency of research findings. Similarly, Matthiessen (2013) discusses how variations in identifying complements impact research methodologies and comparative analyses across languages. Both scholars emphasize the challenges faced in linguistic research due to the discrepancies in complement identification, highlighting the impact on cross-linguistic analyses, despite differences in their theoretical approaches.

Furthermore, the theoretical complexities surrounding complements raise concerns about the generalizability and universality of linguistic theories. Goldberg (1995) discusses the challenges in applying linguistic theories, specifically regarding complementation, across diverse languages and linguistic contexts due to difficulties in establishing universally applicable criteria. Matthiessen (2013) similarly addresses the limitations in the cross-linguistic applicability of linguistic theories, emphasizing the challenges posed by theoretical ambiguities in complement identification. Both scholars highlight the issues of generalizability, albeit through different theoretical lenses.

In discussing the implications of theoretical challenges regarding complements within Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) on syntactic and semantic analyses, various sources provide valuable insights.

Martin (1992) emphasizes the intricate relationship between syntactic structures and English texts within SFG, shedding light on how theoretical ambiguities surrounding complements impact the interpretation of language structures. Fries (1983) discusses the status of syntactic structures within Systemic Linguistics, offering perspectives on how the theoretical issues with complements affect syntactic analyses.

Moreover, Butt et al. (2000) in their guide on using functional grammar explore the practical implications of theoretical complexities regarding complements, especially in terms of their impact on grammatical function analysis. Egins (2004) delves into an introduction to systemic functional linguistics, addressing how theoretical challenges with complements influence semantic interpretations within the framework.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) present a comprehensive introduction to functional grammar, discussing the complexities surrounding complements and their implications for both syntactic and semantic analyses. Bloor and Bloor

(1995) contribute to the discussion by focusing on the functional analysis of English from a Hallidayan approach, highlighting the challenges and implications of theoretical inconsistencies concerning complements in SFG.

Overall, these sources offer diverse insights into the implications of theoretical issues related to complements within SFG for syntactic and semantic analyses, shedding light on the challenges and impacts across various dimensions of linguistic analysis within this theoretical framework.

The theoretical challenges associated with the concept of “complement” in Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) exert a profound influence on text analysis and interpretation, as discussed in various scholarly works.

Martin (1992) underscores the significance of understanding syntactic structures in analyzing English texts within SFG. The theoretical ambiguities surrounding complements can impact the interpretation of text structures, influencing how cohesive relations are identified and interpreted within discourse.

Furthermore, Fries (1983) delves into the status of syntactic structures within Systemic Linguistics, highlighting how theoretical issues with complements influence the analysis and interpretation of texts. The inability to accurately delineate complements from other elements can lead to ambiguities in interpreting grammatical relationships and structures within texts.

In addition, Butt et al. (2000) explore the practical application of functional grammar in text analysis. Theoretical complexities regarding complements may impact the identification and interpretation of grammatical functions within texts, affecting the analysis of how language functions and communicates meanings in written discourse.

Eggs (2004) introduces systemic functional linguistics, emphasizing the role of theoretical challenges with complements in influencing semantic interpretations within text analysis. The uncertainties in identifying and interpreting complements can affect how meanings are conveyed and interpreted in written texts.

Moreover, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) discuss the fundamental principles of functional grammar, addressing how theoretical issues regarding complements impact text analysis and interpretation. The inability to precisely identify complements can lead to incomplete interpretations of how language is used and organized within texts.

Bloor and Bloor (1995) contribute to the discussion by focusing on the functional analysis of English from a Hallidayan perspective. They highlight how theoretical inconsistencies concerning complements in SFG can impact the analysis and interpretation of texts, affecting the understanding of how language functions within written discourse.

In summary, the theoretical challenges associated with complements in Systemic Functional Grammar significantly influence text analysis and interpretation. These challenges affect the identification of cohesive relations, the interpretation of grammatical structures, the analysis of language functions within texts, and the understanding of how meanings are conveyed and interpreted in

written discourse within the framework of SFG.

Theoretical challenges concerning complements within Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) bear significant relevance to cross-linguistic applications of this framework, as explored in scholarly works. [Martin \(1992\)](#) discusses the application of SFG to analyze English texts, emphasizing its potential for cross-linguistic studies. The theoretical challenges with complements may have implications for comparative analyses across languages, affecting the consistent application of SFG principles in linguistic analyses.

[Fries \(1983\)](#) explores the status of syntactic structures in Systemic Linguistics, providing insights into the challenges faced in applying SFG principles across different languages. Theoretical ambiguities concerning complements might hinder the universal application of SFG frameworks in cross-linguistic studies.

Moreover, [Butt et al. \(2000\)](#) present a guide on using functional grammar, which could have implications for cross-linguistic applications. Theoretical complexities regarding complements may impact the application of SFG in analyzing the grammatical structures of diverse languages, affecting the framework's adaptability and generalizability.

[Egins \(2004\)](#) introduces systemic functional linguistics and its potential application across languages. The theoretical challenges with complements might influence the framework's ability to consistently analyze and interpret linguistic features in a cross-linguistic context.

Additionally, [Halliday and Matthiessen \(2014\)](#) provide an introduction to functional grammar, addressing the principles of SFG and their applicability. The theoretical issues with complements may pose challenges when applying SFG principles across different linguistic systems, impacting the framework's reliability in cross-linguistic analyses.

[Bloor and Bloor \(1995\)](#) focus on the functional analysis of English from a Hallidayan perspective, which may offer insights into the challenges and implications of applying SFG to various languages. The theoretical inconsistencies regarding complements could affect the framework's adaptability and robustness in cross-linguistic studies.

The exploration of complements within SFG propels various avenues for future research and theoretical advancements. Firstly, the need for cross-linguistic analyses remains pertinent. Researchers could delve into comparative studies across different languages to discern universal versus language-specific patterns of complementation. Secondly, cognitive perspectives, as initiated by [Thompson \(2014\)](#), present fertile ground for understanding the cognitive motivations behind complement structures. Future research might delve deeper into how cognitive processes influence the formation and usage of complements, advancing our comprehension of language processing. Additionally, considering the socio-pragmatic influences on complementation, further investigations into the pragmatic functions and social context's impact on complement use could enrich our understanding of language in context.

In summary, the theoretical challenges associated with complements within

SFG have implications for its cross-linguistic applications. The uncertainties in identifying and interpreting complements may affect the framework's consistency, adaptability, and reliability when analyzing linguistic features across diverse languages within the scope of Systemic Functional Grammar.

Addressing theoretical issues surrounding complements in SFG holds significant importance in advancing linguistic understanding. The theoretical nuances surrounding complements inform not only our comprehension of sentence structures but also contribute profoundly to our overall understanding of how language operates. Recognizing the multifunctionality and structural roles of complements within SFG aids in developing more comprehensive linguistic frameworks. Furthermore, resolving theoretical ambiguities surrounding complements can enhance language teaching methodologies and computational linguistics applications. Therefore, addressing these theoretical issues not only enriches linguistic theory but also holds practical implications in various domains, emphasizing the importance of further exploration and clarification in this area within SFG.

12. Conclusion

Scholarly investigations into the concept of “complement” within Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) have unveiled crucial insights. One key finding revolves around the structural significance of complements within clause structures. Researchers such as [Halliday and Matthiessen \(2014\)](#) underscored the obligatory nature of complements, emphasizing their indispensability for clause completion. Concurrently, [Hasan \(1985\)](#) highlighted the multifunctionality of complements, elucidating their semantic and pragmatic roles beyond structural constraints. Moreover, empirical studies by [Biber \(1999\)](#) utilizing corpus linguistics methods offered empirical evidence regarding complementation patterns across various registers and genres, highlighting the distributional aspects of complements in language use.

Although the content presented in this review leans toward exploration rather than systematic analysis, it underscores the considerable work that remains at the theoretical level of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). The theoretical matters discussed in this paper only scratch the surface of a much larger landscape of issues. A more meticulous and comprehensive investigation, particularly across various languages, would likely unveil numerous additional challenges.

One notable problem within SFG is the lack of a clear distinction between the two levels of analysis: syntactic function and semantic role. The proposed semantic perspective for approaching grammar in SFG should not be misconstrued as conducting a syntactic analysis devoid of formal syntactic scrutiny. Instead, it should be seen as an intertwining of syntactic function and semantic role analyses, emphasizing the need for a clearer demarcation between these levels.

Undoubtedly, delving into the theoretical constructs of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) holds significant importance as it forms the bedrock for con-

ducting text analyses. There ought to be a greater advocacy within the SFG community for focused investigations at its theoretical level. Encouraging more presentations on theoretical investigations at Systemic Functional meetings is crucial, drawing from personal interactions with lecturers in the field.

Systemic Functional meetings often prioritize text analyses, sidelining the fundamental theoretical underpinnings of SFG. This tendency becomes apparent, especially when practitioners apply SFG to texts in different languages, sometimes using approaches ill-suited for the specific text. Notably, SFG, as delineated by [Eggins \(2004\)](#) and [Halliday and Matthiessen \(2004\)](#), predominantly centers on English, leading to potential discrepancies when applied to other languages.

Lastly, it is essential to provide students of linguistics with a comprehensive understanding of general linguistics before introducing them to specific schools of grammar, such as SFG. This foundational knowledge equips students to approach the theory of SFG critically. This is crucial because individuals who strongly adhere to a particular school of grammar may inadvertently lose their ability to critically evaluate and deconstruct that specific framework. By “deconstruction,” it’s not about dismantling the theory but rather comprehending the fundamental and philosophical principles that form the theory’s basis, as well as the theoretical frameworks guiding operational analyses.

Armed with a solid grounding in general linguistics, individuals conducting text analyses within the framework of SFG can pursue two simultaneous objectives. First, they can aim to understand the social, cultural, and ideological dimensions and choices embedded within a text. Second, their analyses can serve as valuable sources of theoretical feedback to enhance and refine the theory of SFG. This dual approach allows for a deeper exploration of both the contextual meanings within texts and the theoretical development of the SFG framework.

In concluding the study on the theoretical problems surrounding the term “complement” in Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), several avenues for future research could be proposed to further enhance the understanding of this linguistic framework. Firstly, future studies could explore the application of computational linguistics and natural language processing techniques to analyze and categorize complements within SFG more efficiently. By leveraging technological advancements, researchers can develop automated tools and algorithms to parse and classify complements in large corpora, facilitating a deeper investigation into their syntactic and semantic properties.

Additionally, future research endeavors might delve into cross-linguistic analyses to compare and contrast the treatment of complements in different languages within the SFG framework. Comparative studies could shed light on how various languages manifest complements, identifying both commonalities and divergences in their structures and functions across linguistic systems. This comparative approach, suggested by scholars like [Matthiessen \(2013\)](#), could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of complements within the broader scope of systemic functional grammar.

Furthermore, future studies could focus on refining the theoretical models proposed by Halliday (2014) and Thompson (2014) concerning complements. Researchers could seek to address the theoretical intricacies identified in this study by proposing modifications or extensions to existing frameworks. This could involve developing clearer criteria for distinguishing complements from adjuncts, refining classification systems, or proposing new theoretical constructs to accommodate linguistic nuances not previously accounted for within SFG's framework.

By exploring these suggested avenues for future research, scholars can continue to advance the theoretical structure of Systemic Functional Grammar, providing deeper insights into the complexities of complements and further refining our understanding of language structures within this linguistic framework.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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