

Modification as a linguistic relationship and a diagnostic tool: A *just so* problem in Functional Discourse Grammar

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The present paper investigates English *just so* constructions within the framework of Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG). In keeping with FDG's "form-oriented 'function-to-form' approach" (Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008: 39; original emphasis), the study proceeds semasiologically by, first, examining the uses of relatively independent forms (i.e. the focus particle *just* modifying *so* as a degree word and a manner proform), then turning to more tightly-knit structures (i.e. *just so* as a subordinator of purpose and condition) and, finally, looking at the fixed expression *just so* used as a pragmatic marker. Based on data from the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) and the *Corpus of Historical American English* (COHA), we argue that the different meanings of *just so* raise a number of issues related to the analysis of modification in FDG, namely the status and function of the modifier *just* in the constructions under discussion, the concomitant representation of *so*, as well as the criterion of modifiability in the classification of lexical and grammatical items.

Focusing modifier + degree word

As a starting point from which to compare the other forms, we look at *just* as a focusing modifier restricting the degree word *so* (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 587). In this construction, *just* and *so* together may modify adjectives (1a) and adverbs (1b), whereby their combination is clearly compositional: *just* can be replaced by other modifiers like *really* (e.g. *really so funny*).

- (1) a. Well, I think that is *just so funny*. (COHA 1980)
b. Take your rifle, and fire a shot at that Crane, who has *just so foolishly* put himself within reach. (COHA 1832)

FDG makes a sharp distinction between lexical and grammatical phenomena in language (Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008: 9). Thus, according to Hengeveld's (2017: 31) recent distinction (on the basis of Keizer 2007), a lexical element can be modified and focalized (e.g. *That good **MAN** did it*), a lexical operator cannot be modified but may be focalized (e.g. ***THAT** man*), while a (grammatical) operator can be neither modified nor focalized (e.g. *a man*).

Using this classificatory system, *just* in (1) would be analyzed as a lexeme. It may not be as semantically contentful as prototypical lexical items like nouns or verbs, but it can take focus (e.g. *He is **JUST** so funny*) and seems to accept certain modifiers: *The session was really/actually just so mellow and kind of easy going* (COCA 2012).

The classification of *so* with respect to the above scheme is not straightforward. Degree words in FDG fulfill a variety of roles and can be more or less subjective (speaker-oriented), which is why they have been rendered as operators or modifiers of an Ascriptive Subact at the Interpersonal Level or as operators or modifiers of a Property at the Representational Level (Van de Velde 2007: 216; see also García Velasco 2013 for an overview). For example, a degree word like *very* is triggered by an intensification operator at the Representational Level (García Velasco 2013: 87–89), whereas the more subjective *-ly* degree adverbs like *dreadfully* appear as lexical modifiers at the Interpersonal Level (García Velasco 2013: 93–94). The degree word *so* is placed as a medial category between these two extremes by García Velasco (2013: 89–92). Based on the evidence that *so* licenses clauses like the result clause in (2a), he argues that, because in these cases *so* takes a proposition as its

argument (*that I decided not to buy it*) and the degree phrase as a whole (*so...that*) modifies *expensive*, *so* must behave as a lexical head, represented in (3).

- (2) a. It was *so expensive that I decided not to buy it*.
 b. *It was expensive *that I decided not to buy it*.
 (García Velasco 2013: 90)
- (3) so intelligent that he got an A
 RL: (f_i: intelligent_A (f_i): [(f_j: so_{Deg} (f_j)) (p_i: -that he got an A- (p_i)_{Result}] (f_i))
 (García Velasco 2013: 91)

This analysis would not apply to *so* in example (1a), where *so* is semantically more abstract and does not license a subordinate clause as an argument. It can take focus: *I think that is just SO funny*; the modification of *so* is also possible, but only in a restricted fashion (one of García Velasco's (2013) arguments for classifying *very* as an operator). This leads to the issue that *so* in such examples cannot be straightforwardly classified as a lexeme like in (3), nor can it be an operator, since it takes focus and is modified by *just*. One potential solution is to view *so* as a lexical operator applied to *funny* at the Representational Level and *just* as an interpersonal modifier of the corresponding Ascriptive Subact. But this then yields the problem that in later forms, like the subordinator use (see below), *just* would change from an Interpersonal to a Representational Level unit, a rather unexpected direction of development in FDG.

Focusing modifier + manner proform

Early examples from COHA show *just so* used as an adverb of manner, sometimes fronted, as in (4), or as an adverb indicating a comparison (i.e. *in the same way*) as in (5).

- (4) The Lady remarked that the use of carpets, like other luxuries, was gaining ground too rapidly among those who were often deficient in real comfort. "Silks and satins put out the kitchen-fire, as a wise man has said." "Ay, Ma'am, he answered, **just so** I tell my young gals, when they get when they get a teasin' their mammy, for somethin' fine and gay..." (COHA 1824)
- (5) The only reason I can give for the fact, is, that in the straight tube the shot expand more violently for confinement; in the other, the gradual expansion moderates this violence. **Just so** a clergyman's son is more licentious than other young men. (COHA 1832)

Although the two examples here seem to be very similar, they are not the same. In example (4), *so* has anaphoric reference to what has been previously said (*Silks and satins put out the kitchen-fire...*) and *just so* appears to be still compositional: *just* can be dropped without changing the meaning of the sentence: *Ay, Ma'am ... so I tell my young gals*. However, in example (5), *just so* has a textual discourse function metaphorically juxtaposing two parts of the text. Furthermore, it is no longer compositional or at least not in sentence initial position, as *just* cannot be dropped there (...**So a clergyman's son is more licentious than other young men*).

Following Hengeveld & Mackenzie (2008: 265), *so* as a manner proform would be represented as a headless (m) variable at the Representation Level. However, by definition, an absent head cannot be modified (Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008: 237). Therefore, there are two potential solutions to explore:

- i) *just* is a modifier or operator at the Interpersonal Level and modifies or applies to the Subact of Ascription corresponding to the (m) *so* at the Representational Level;
- ii) *just* is representational and lexical, indicating that headless variables can be modified after all (as suggested by Giomi 2020: §2.2.3).

A further avenue to investigate is if and how the two forms of manner, exemplified in (4) and (5) respectively, would have to be represented differently.

Subordinator

In F(D)G, conjunctions are classified according to the layer and level they pertain to: 2nd order (state-of-affairs), 3rd order (propositional content) and 4th order (speech act) adverbials (Hengeveld 1996). Moreover, Hengeveld & Wanders (2007: 213) classify conjunctions along the two dimensions of form (simple, i.e. a single lexical item, vs. complex, i.e. multiple lexical items) and function (lexical vs. grammatical). Within the latter dimension, the ability to be modified distinguishes lexical subordinators like *before* from grammatical subordinators like *until* (Hengeveld & Wanders 2007: 214). To this, we have added Hengeveld's (2017) focus parameter as well in ten Wolde & Schwaiger (2020).

With *just so*, the condition subordinator develops from the purpose use and is clearly a complex grammatical conjunction introduced by a Condition function. Our FDG representation is given in (6).

- (6) It [your grip] isn't important, *just so it works...* (COHA)
 RL: (p₁: -It isn't important- (p₁): (ep₁: -it works- (ep₁))_{Cond} (p₁))

However, the purpose subordinator is more problematic to classify: the compositionality of expressions like (7a) is difficult to determine because *so* as a conjunction by itself can also denote purpose (7b). In addition, the *just so* purpose conjunction can be modified (7c); however, it is hard to tell if *mostly* here has narrow scope over the conjunction or wide scope over the whole clause. *Just* can take focus, but *so* cannot, as (7d) shows.

- (7) a. Could Robin come to visit, *just so* the old woman could see someone from the reservation again? (COCA 2017)
 b. Could Robin come to visit, *so* the woman could see someone from the reservation?
 c. Could Robin come to visit, *mostly just so* the woman could see someone from the reservation?
 d. Could Robin come to visit, *JUST so/*just SO* the woman could see someone from the reservation?

We previously represented both *so* and *just* as lexical in these constructions, see (8); however, this analysis yields some potential problems. If we assume that this use of *so* has developed from the manner proform, an absent head (m), then it does not seem plausible that in the later stages, when it functions as a purpose subordinator, it becomes a lexically filled property (f). Furthermore, if earlier *just* is a focusing modifier at the Interpersonal Level (see above), can it be subsequently coopted into being a modifier at the Representational Level?

- (8) RL: (ep₁: -we need to have kids- (ep₁): (f₁: [(f₂: so (f₂): (f₃: just (f₃)) (f₂)) (p₁: -I can justify the toys- (p₁))_{Ref}] (f₁)) (ep₁))

Along with the general issue of classification, this stage raises the additional question of modification scope, particularly when the latter is used as a diagnostic test for lexicality, and how it can be applied in the case of subordinators. Treating all conjunctions as lexical, as suggested by Pérez Quintero (2013), does not seem feasible in light of our data. In general, we will discuss the link between all the previous stages and the development of the purpose meaning.

Pragmatic marker

To demonstrate the endpoint of what emerges as a typical grammaticalization cline, the paper will briefly discuss the pragmatic marker uses of *just so*. It is an important element in at least two

separate interpersonal expressions: *just so you know* and *(it) just so happens*. The discourse marker *just so you know* develops from the purpose subordinator use and adopts a range of pragmatic functions, for example that of signaling topic shift in (9).

- (9) KOTB: You missed the Cutest Baby Contest and we're so bummed because -- oh! Come on.
STOCKMAN: That's Juice-Juice. [...]
STOCKMAN: So that's why I call her Juice-Juice. That's my baby.
KOTB: ***Just so you know***, Shawn's on the road all the time. I didn't realize that you guys were...
(COCA 2011)

(It) just so happens most likely stems from one of the earlier forms like the degree word or manner use and can be employed for contradicting or indicating that something is surprising (10).

- (10) "Has anyone given a thought to where we are going to get iron for blades and horseshoes and other such things?"
"And I suppose you have the answer," Andrew replied.
"***Just so happens I do***," Mina said proudly. (COCA 1990)

In general, this study discusses *just* and *so* individually and how they interact in different constructions. Hereby the issue of modification turns out to be crucial, not only as a relationship between *just*, *so* and other units, but also as a diagnostic for lexical vs. grammatical status in FDG.

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