Il faut distinguer la séquence linéaire ou temporelle dans les énoncés de l’ordre linguistique. « L’ordre » peut être considéré soit – dans un sens large et saussurien – comme la contribution linguistique à la forme de la pensée, étroitement liée à l’analyse linguistique de l’expérience, soit – dans un sens plus étroit introduit par Jan Mulder – comme une propriété des relations phonologiques et grammaticales. L’ordre des relations linguistiques au sens étroit contribue à l’ordre de nos pensées de façon indirecte et sans rapport direct avec nos perceptions de la réalité. Le problème de l’analyse est de préciser ce qu’on entend par « communication » dans l’identification de relations ordonnées.

BACKGROUND

« Language, at least in the sense of « langage », is part of our lived experience. It helps create our conscious experience1. For that reason, perhaps, there can be a reluctance to accept the importance of theoretical concepts such as « order » and « ordered relations » in linguistics. The concepts seem far from the lived reality. Of course, we all have the lived experience of carrying things and feeling their weight, but few would dispute the need for concepts like « force », « fulcrum », or « lever ». Order is part of our understanding; a 2 kilo pack of potatoes is more expensive than a 1 kilo pack of the same type. The perception of different sizes of pack gives rise to various


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orderings expressible through our analysis of experience. For that we require the naming of a relation, such as is heavier than, the naming of components of experience, such as the packs, and their distribution in an ordered pattern. As we shall see below, this ordering depends on the language in question and is not in a point-for-point correspondence with the real world. The conventional linguistic analysis of experience is language specific, as André Martinet often rightly argued. Overcoming the reluctance to accept theoretical concepts is part of making linguistic analyses more precise and objective. Perhaps, the reluctance is smaller when we are speaking of « langue » in either of its main senses (particular language or common properties defining all languages or « language- hood »). Nevertheless, it is important to ensure that a theoretical concept like « order » has a clear usefulness in accounting for the facts of communication. In particular, linguists must account for the mediation of linguistic conventions between the world of immediate or remembered experience, verbal or non-verbal, and verbal signals. This is not solely a matter of the « creativity » of natural languages. While all languages have an indefinite capacity for the creation of complex signs through their economical patterning, the more challenging question is to account for the adaptation of linguistic means to particular communicative needs\(^2\), including our immediate experiences of packs of potatoes and ways of looking at them. However, for a theoretical concept like « order » to be perceived as useful, « order » must have a clear meaning and its application must involve clear procedures.

The idea of applying the notion « ordered relation » in phonology and grammar was Jan Mulder’s\(^3\). Earlier, in a well-known paper, the British linguist, Frank Palmer\(^4\), distinguished « sequence », or relations of precedence in actual speech acts, from « order » as a characteristic of linguists’ descriptions. In speech, unit \(a\) precedes unit \(b\) which precedes unit \(c\), etc.

\(^3\) First introduced in Mulder’s early papers and in Sets and Relations in Phonology (1968), Oxford, Clarendon Press and later in many subsequent works.
I have called accounts of this aspect of grammar « realisational sequence »⁵ to differentiate it from constructional and dependency relations. (« Contrastive » relations may be matters of sequence only or they may have separate communicational function⁶.) Palmer points out that structural relations are accounted for in linguistic descriptions and that structural relations do not necessarily coincide with sequence in speech. He concludes that a different concept « order » should be used and that « order » is a property of linguistic descriptions. For him, « order » is part of the linear representation in the description. Palmer’s evidence comes from features such as discontinuity and hierarchical relations, which indicate a disparity between realisational sequence and grammatical relations. The communicational features of a language can be represented in a description, but the features of communication must be distinguished from the features of the representational device. Hierarchical relations and discontinuity are communicational features arising from the application of analytical procedures to phenomena and not from the means of representation.

While Palmer’s paper has some value and points to the fact that a linguistic description puts « order » into the mass of phenomena for the purposes of understanding, at no point does he see that order is a property of relations. In fact, as is typical of the period, Palmer’s approach is concerned with units and their distribution in categories. There is no sense that linguistic units contract relations and that linguistic relations are communicatively important⁷.

In logic, an ordered relation is asymmetrical and (a strict order) transitive. For example, if –in the real world– John is taller than Fred and Fred is taller than Joe, then John is taller

⁵. See Rastall P., La Linguistique, 2004/2.


⁷. I think Palmer was misled into asking the wrong questions in this famous paper but that is a side issue here. Of course, Hjelmslev had already pointed out –somewhat cryptically and perhaps too strongly– that a « system consists of relationships, not things ». There must be « things » between which relations hold at a given level of analysis, although those « things » (signs, phonemes) may well have relationally defined identities, when seen from other points of view, but Hjelmslev was right to emphasise linguistic relations (Hjelmslev, L. 1953. Prolegomena to a Theory of Language (trans. F. Whitfield), Urbana, University of Indiana, p. 13).
than Joe. Clearly, for the same people, the converse relations are false. Fred is not taller than John and Joe is not taller than Fred. The relation «is taller than» is obviously transitive. Of course, if John, Fred, and Joe are brothers, the relation of «being the brother of» is symmetrical (and transitive). Then the relation is unordered. The property of order belongs to the particular respect or relation in which we consider the individuals. It does not belong to the individuals themselves (which must be held constant). Those are important points. The general relation of «being in construction with» is symmetrical, but particular constructional relations may be symmetrical or asymmetrical. Unilateral dependency relations are asymmetrical. In Old cars, old is in construction with cars and vice versa, but «is dependent for its function on» is clearly asymmetrical. Old is dependent for its function on cars, but not vice versa. Thus, the constituents of constructions can be ordered or unordered, when they are considered from a different point of view.

The capacity to operate with «order» is a general human ability, which is exploited in natural languages. As we have seen, we order real-world objects by size, as well as many other properties such as radioactivity, luminescence, etc. We can classify by alphabetic or numerical order. In other areas of life «right of way» on the roads involves an asymmetrical relation between drivers signalled by traffic lights or other road signs. The recognition of asymmetry in relations is fundamental to all science. Real-world asymmetries are used as natural indices, as when Archimedes discovered his principle in the bath.

Now, Jan Mulder’s point was that we can distinguish usefully between unordered (or symmetrical) relations in

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8. At least in English. In many languages, there is no general term for «male sibling». Normally, one must distinguish «elder brother» (gege) from «younger brother» (de’di) in Chinese (although the general term xiongdi also exists) and in Malay the elder brother (abang) is distinguished from other brothers (adik lelaki). Here the relations are ordered.

9. It is interesting that bi-lateral dependency relations are symmetrical, although they are clearly syntactic for other reasons of internal complexity, e.g. the harder he tried ←→ the less he succeeded. This implies a rephrasing of some of Mulder’s statements on ordered relations in his theory to allow for bi-lateral dependency.

phonology and grammar on the one hand, and ordered (asymmetrical) relations in phonology and grammar on the other in such a way that different phonological and grammatical sub-systems can be defined according to the properties of relations between elements in the systems, and in such a way that the communicational properties of constructions can be accounted for. The distinction between ordered and unordered constructions in phonology and grammar allows a classification of communication systems according to the constructional properties. Languages, as systems of both ordered and unordered subsystems in both phonology and grammar, differ structurally from other communication systems. Their possession of all of the possible subsystems ultimately accounts for their economy and « universal purport »11. In Mulder’s approach, phonemic and morphological (or pleremic) systems contain only unordered relations and phonotactic and syntactic (plerotactic) systems contain ordered relations. (But not only ordered relations, as we have seen.) Mulder insisted, of course, that « order » here was « functional order ». That is, ordered relations should separately contribute to communication. Clearly, that is an important restriction on the respects in which we can look for asymmetry in linguistic relations.

Thus, if grammatical units x and y are in construction, the relation between them can be ordered or not ordered. Ordered relations are asymmetrical, i.e. x R y and y R x are communicationally different. But any relation can be different from its converse in some respect, so the problem is to restrict the term « communicational », and that Mulder and Hervey did not fully achieve. Their chief appeal was to central or denotational meaning in grammar and the formal distinction of denotational meanings in phonology. However, differences in order can relate to various other parameters of « communication ». Even in phonology, where distinctive features such as /nasal/ and /apical/ seem to form

an obviously unordered pair, from a constructional point of view /nasal/ belongs to the (phonological) order and /apical/ to the series but not vice versa\textsuperscript{12} (the features are ordered with respect to different categories). So, we have to identify functional asymmetry as asymmetry in contribution to communicational distinctiveness here. It follows that the simple absence of a converse should be distinguished from functional asymmetry and this is especially so in grammar. We cannot permute noun and plural or preposition and nominal in English (the converses plural + noun and nominal + preposition do not exist), but that is not evidence of functional asymmetry in either case. As we shall see below, distinguishing ordered from unordered combinations is not an easy task.

We should signal also, however, that the idea of « separate relevance to communication » is a very wide one because « communication » itself has so many different aspects. Furthermore, « separate relevance », when applied to relations, does not have the same meaning as when it is applied to units. We cannot commute relations in the same contexts, so « functional » for relations means something like « necessary for the construction to function as a cohesive whole ». Mulder comments that relations are « functional from an overall point of view »\textsuperscript{13}. There is an obvious danger here of confusing different parameters of communication by shifting the meaning of the term « functional » (see below). Finally in this respect, one should note that linguistic relations may be asymmetrical and relevant to communication but not necessarily transitive\textsuperscript{14}. In old cars can break down, old depends for its function on cars and cars depends for its function on can break down, but old does not transitively depend for its function on can break down. Old is only indirectly in construction with can break down. Linguistic hierarchy means that we are not dealing with a strict order.

\textsuperscript{13} Mulder, « Postulates.... », def. 3/2.
\textsuperscript{14} For a discussion, see Shreider Yu.A., 1975, Equality, Resemblance, and Order, Moscow, Mir, chapter 4.
Ordered Relations and Experience

SEQUENCES, PERMUTATION, AND HIERARCHY

Relations of precedence are obviously ordered and transitive. Old precedes cars which precedes can which precedes break which precedes down but the converses are not possible (except, of course the inversion for a question). Constructional relations may be functionally asymmetrical, but asymmetry does not always imply that a relation is communicatively functional. As I have pointed out elsewhere, sequence can serve a variety of purposes.

In principle, however, variation in sequence offers a huge communicative potential. Given 2 units (a, b), there are potentially two sequences. With 3 units (a, b, c), there are six sequences, and with 4 units (a, b, c, d) 24, and with 5 (a, b, c, d, e) there are 120 permutations etc. The number rises exponentially with the number of units. A communication system with n units could allow any sequence to form a message and thus have a very high efficiency. But of course, natural languages do not work like that. In our example, the only other possible sequence is can old cars break down?, where the change in function is related to the inversion. As we know, hierarchical relations are employed to create an infinity of messages. Although, there are examples of permutation in natural languages, it is likely that unrestricted permutability would impair comprehension, as there would be no reference points in any utterance and each point in the utterance would have maximal uncertainty. Natural languages are context-sensitive and hence « Markoff » processes (i.e. ones in which the probability of a subsequent unit is related to preceding probabilities). The possibility of absolutely free permutability is stochastic but not a Markoff process. That is, there is no predictability in the system. This means that high memorisation costs would be involved in such a system and any noise could impair communication. Furthermore many n-tuples could have only one interpretation, regardless of sequence. The three units, {John, runs, fast} could have six sequences but only one interpretation. Also, many n-tuples (e.g. {mouse, cat,  

16. n! is given by n x (n-1) x (n-2) x (n-3) x (n-4)….. etc. until n-x = 1
The most obvious possibility for the expression of an ordered relation is permutation. An ordered relation is one in which, for any pair \((a, b)\), the relation \(a R b\) is different from its converse \(b R a\). If we take the numbers, \((4, 2)\), the order 42 in number writing is clearly different from 24, so the relation «tens» to «units» is obviously ordered. In English phonology, there is permutation in /asp/ («asp») and /aps/ («apse») and /taks/ («tax») and /task/ («task»). But that sort of permutation is relatively rare in natural languages and, when it does occur, the difference is not always one of central meaning. Indeed, permutation may not give a difference in meaning at all.

In English, noun-noun combinations are ordered and convey differences of meaning, where the same pairs are related in constructions. Plastic sheet and sheet plastic, business communication and communication business are examples of permutation expressing clear differences of central meaning. In Russian, tričasa («three hours») and časa tri («about three hours») is another instance. In Chinese, bei³lu⁴ («North road») is distinguished from lu⁴bei³ («area north of the road»). However, in English not all meaningful noun combinations have meaningful converses (carpet cleaner, but cleaner carpet is possible, but without a meaningful interpretation for the same meanings of the component signs i.e. holding the components constant). Furthermore we can find permutations whose effect, if any, is one of emphasis (contrastive prominence, not central meaning) – if you go to London, you can see Big Ben: you can see Big Ben, if you go to London: On Sunday I went to London/I went to London on Sunday. Also in English the delicious but expensive meal/ the
meal, delicious but expensive (the latter commenting rather than attributing) involve different ways of looking at the adjectival – noun relationship rather than different central meaning. In French, une idée excellente/ une excellente idée is of this sort.

There are misleading inversions. In the pair rather a clever student/ a rather clever student the inversion is a matter of emphasis but involves two signs which are not in construction (the article and the adverb, rather, which is in construction with the adjective, clever). There is no inversion of the adverb-adjective relation, but there is discontinuity. Furthermore, we must beware of false permutations. In English, a few good men and a good few men are not examples of permutation. The expression a good few has the fixed meaning « quite a lot of/ several ». In French we find examples of this such as honnête homme/ homme honnête. Similarly, in Malay jam berapa (« what time is it? ») and berapa jam (« how many hours ») involves a false permutation because of the difference in meaning of jam (despite the obvious motivation). In those cases, the units are not held constant. Examples in Malay such as rumah itu (« that house ») and itu – rumah (« that is a house ») involve varying the relation, even though the component signs are held constant.

On the other hand, many constructions are clearly asymmetrical (because they contain a unilateral dependency) but their realisational sequence is fixed (big → house, in ← London, etc.), so no permutation is available. Clearly, communicational asymmetry does not imply permutation and permutation does not always imply communicational asymmetry. Mulder always made that point clear. As we can see from some of the examples, however, the elasticity of the term « communication » with its many parameters means that permutation can be associated with non-central meaning and hence some sort of communicational difference (main clause ← subordinate clause / subordinate clause → main clause, time enough / enough time, the two other men / the other two men, I have never been there / I never have been there). Here we must note that the same grammatical relation is involved in all cases, so the variation in realisational sequence is in these cases a matter of significative contrastive function18. A classification of permutations is useful

for aesthetic or stylistic analysis, although that is beyond what Mulder was concerned with. However, if « communication » is taken in a restricted sense to exclude aesthetic strategies and responses\textsuperscript{19}, Mulder leaves himself open to an unexpected extension of his theory. That is, denotationally identical permutations can be connotationally asymmetrical. On the other hand, it could be argued that what we are dealing with is (allo-morphic) variants of constructions which can be stylistically categorised. Mulder’s theory then shows its usefulness in identifying a procedure leading to analysis of style in its appropriate place\textsuperscript{20}. Similarly, as we see below, sentences which are cohesively and/or coherently related are normally « ordered » with respect to one another in a text, but this textual order is a matter of logical or practical connection and sequencing, and so « communicational » in the wider sense of the effectiveness of the transmission of the signal rather than being a matter of the linguistic system.

Mulder’s definition, as it stands, is too wide because the parameters of « communication » are not restricted. As we have seen, we must restrict asymmetry to a given respect. However, the situation can be remedied by recognizing different parameters of communication. Apart from the above issue, problems can still occur in analysis because of the indeterminacy of the term « asymmetry ». For example, in a word such as \textit{unhelpful}, it is clear that \textit{un}- can combine only with \textit{helpful}. There is, thus, a clear bracketing here, \textit{((un-) + (help + ful))}, not \textit{((un- + help) + ful))}. In Mulder’s overall sense, there is an asymmetry in the construction. Very few would wish to say there was a syntactic relation here, however. Followers of axiomatic functionalism would treat this as a case of a morphological (unordered) relation and followers of the late André Martinet would –I think– see this as a « syntheme » rather than as a syntactic construction. I have discussed these problems in an earlier publication\textsuperscript{21} and return to the issue below.

\textsuperscript{19} For a discussion of aesthetics and communication, see Rastall, « Aesthetic Responses and the « Cloudiness » of Language, \textit{La Linguistique}, 2008/1.

\textsuperscript{20} Stylistic inversion for emphasis is another category of importance here –\textit{I have never been there / Never have I been there}, sometimes with a change of structure– if you were to go to London, you could see the sights / Were you to go to London, you could see the sights.

Ordered Relations and Experience

CRITERIA OF ORDER

If there is the possibility of ordered relations in natural languages, clearly the order is a matter of hierarchical structure and its importance is in accounting for the capacity of humans to create and understand indefinite numbers of messages through ordered structures, while noting that some combinations are more closely linked in unordered constellations. Permutation may be an expression of ordering, but ordering is normally a matter of the asymmetry between the domain and the counter-domain of grammatical relations. Mulder, of course, exploits the difference between functionally (communicationally) ordered and unordered relations to distinguish syntactic (ordered) constructions from morphological (unordered) constructions. Languages are said to consist of systems of both phonologically and grammatically ordered and unordered constructions. The ordering relation is therefore central to Mulder’s account of language. This makes it important to be able to distinguish functional asymmetry from its absence. As noted above, there are some complicating factors. In particular, asymmetry is generally a matter of hierarchical relations and dependency relations rather than simple permutation. In phonology, a group of distinctive features is unordered in the sense that, for any pair, their constructional relation and its converse are not communicationally different (e.g. in English nasal R labial and labial R nasal are both equivalent to /m/), whereas the phonemes {a, p, t} form the groups /apt/, /tap/, and /pat/. In the case of grammatical phenomena, there is « order » if there is either asymmetry demonstrated by a difference in the domain and counter-domain of a constructional relation or the existence of a functional dependency relation between a pair of grammatical units. Thus, a constellation of monemes such as hat and plural (hats) is not permutable in the realisational sequence, but the same is true of in the garden or might come. However, in the construction hat + plural, there is no potential for asymmetry, whereas the other constructions allow for asymmetries of various sorts, which leads us to distinguish them as « syntactic » rather than « morphological » or « synthematic ». We need to be clear about the reasons for the distinction.
It is obvious that the notion of « order » in natural languages would lose its force if we could not recognize its opposite – the absence of functional order. While there are few problems over this in phonology, it is more complicated in grammar. Mulder and Hervey made several attempts to explain the distinction in grammar\textsuperscript{22}. The main principles are outlined above along with some of the problems. As examples, we might consider how to determine whether root + case + number (as in, for example, Russian rabotoi « with/by work »), article + noun \textit{(the woman)}, and preposition + nominal \textit{(in France)} in English are functionally symmetrical or asymmetrical. All are genuine combinations of separate signs and all are non-permutable. However, the Russian combination is normally seen as symmetrical, « synthematic », or « morphological » whereas the other two are seen as syntactic or asymmetrical. Are there any criteria for distinguishing the cases? We might consider the following tests.

1. There is ordering if the component signs belong to different categories. However, it is clear that root, case and number are different categories in a morphological combination and business and communication are of the same category in a syntactic combination \textit{(business communication, communication business)}, so the test is invalid.

2. There is ordering if one or more components of the construction has variable syntactic functions. This might be proposed in the light of the variable functions of nominals in predicative syntagms \textit{(the man ate a biscuit: the car injured the man: the company gave the man a promotion, etc.). The test works to establish asymmetry in the woman and in France where France, woman and in all have variable syntactic functions, although the has only one function. On the other hand, in the case of a root such as rabot- in rabotoi (« with or by work »), we have to note that we also find rabot- in other constructions, rabotat' \textit{(« to work »)}, rabotnik \textit{(« worker »)} etc. This test is at best indicative, rather than conclusive.

3. If we insisted that all members of an n-tuple must have variable function (rather than one or more), then we would find that roots such as rabot- combine with other signs which have only one function each. This would be a reason for distinguishing constellations of root + case + number etc. as symmetrical or « morphological »). Unfortunately, this test would also mean that the woman is a morphological combination because the has only a single function and so this requirement is also inadequate.

4. A combination is unordered if all component signs are necessary for the well-formedness of the construction (occurrence inter-dependency). This is true of some combinations such as root + case + number in Russian, but it is not true of noun + number in English (both hat and hats can occur) and syntactic occurrence inter-dependency can also be found (as with in France). So, this test does not work either.

5. A combination is unordered if only one relation between the components is possible (i.e. the converse of point 2 above). This is certainly true of constellations such as root + case + number in Russian or noun + number in English. However, it is also true that only one possible constructional relation holds between the and woman and in and France. Therefore, this test does not distinguish the cases.

6. A combination is ordered if permutation of the components corresponds to a difference in central meaning. This is valid in a limited number of cases (e.g. plastic sheet/sheet plastic (above)), but in most cases permutation merely leads to an impossible sequence (woman the or France in), so the test is of only partial value. One should note the cases of difference in non-central meaning associated with some permutations (excellente idée / idée excellente (above)) where the grammatical relation is unchanged and there is no difference in central meaning.

7. A combination is ordered if one or more of the components has complex commutants in the same context, i.e. if bracketing is possible in either the domain or counter-domain of the relation. This shows that the components are not ultimate constituents at that level of analysis and
that there are differences of combinatory potential on either side of the relation\textsuperscript{23}. Thus, in root + case + number constellations or in noun + number in English, there are only simple commutants in each position, whereas in the cases of in France or the woman, the nominals commute with bracketed complexes, in (tennis competitions), in (west France), the (plastic sheet), the (police woman), etc. This test works and shows that, in dealing with symmetrical complexes in grammar, we are dealing with « small-scale » combinations\textsuperscript{24}, where the constituents are also the ultimate constituents, and that syntactic relations have the potential for hierarchical structuring. Where the same relation can be permuted without a change in central meaning, but with a change in peripheral meaning, we could speak of a stylistic ordering of allomorphic variants.

8. It might be thought that if a grammatical unit is shown to enter ordered combinations, then it is always syntactic. However, we can see that a unit such as hat commutes with woman but also combines with plural in hats. As Mulder says\textsuperscript{25}, we must distinguish the syntactic unit (word), hat, from the moneme, hat, occurring in morphological contexts. So, the principle is true only if we are dealing with the same unit on the same ontological level. This is tantamount to saying that we must determine in each case whether a combination is morphological or syntactic.

We can see, then, that it is possible to distinguish asymmetry from its absence in grammar, but that the parameters of asymmetry are varied and involve a number of different aspects of communication.

\textsuperscript{23} See Mulder’s Postulates def. 8b. An unordered complex (as a syntactic unit) can contract but not contain ordering relations.

\textsuperscript{24} As I have pointed out elsewhere, we should not be too dogmatic here. Morphological units can acquire syntactic functions. Historically, this is the case with the English « genitive ’s » and more recently with units such as ish (half-past-six –ish) and even the plural (the two (word number one)s in tennis), but the general rule must be to check each case in turn and not to distort the analysis with marginal phenomena.

\textsuperscript{25} See Mulder J. W. F., 1993,((How Real Are Linguistic Entities? », La linguistique, 29.)
ORDER IN LANGUAGE AND EXPERIENCE

It is important to remember that, in languages, relations of any sort are contracted by linguistic units. Thus, in grammar, ordered relations are contracted by grammatical units, principally (but not exclusively26) linguistic signs in the language in question. Some signs, such as verbs or prepositions, express perceived relations (including ordered relations) between named components of experiences. However, there is no one-to-one or natural correspondence between perceived real-world relations and grammatical ordering. In the first place, the same real-world ordering may be expressed by different grammatical means. *I am cold, Mir is kalt, j’ai froid* are differently ordered combinations of signs expressing the same sensation of cold by the speaker. The real-world relation of possession is expressed by different means in different languages – *I have a book, u men’a kniga* (Russian: « with me – book »), etc. and differently in the same language – *John owns a car, the car is John’s, the car belongs to John. John gave a book to Mary and Mary received a book from John* communicate the same real-world process of exchange viewed from different perspectives but with the same grammatical pattern. Conversely, the same grammatical order may convey a variety of real-world interpretations. Thus, in *John hit Mary, John* names the performer of the action, but not in *John heard Mary, John believed Mary*, etc. The real-world ordered relation in *noun-noun* combinations in English or *noun-genitive* combinations in Russian vary considerably. Thus, we have *silk shirt* (made from silk), *silk factory* (where the silk is made), *silk market* (where silk is sold), *silk trader* (who buys and sells silk) and *dom Ivana* (Ivan’s house), *rabota Ivana* (Ivan’s work, i.e. done by him), *zarplata Ivana* (Ivan’s salary – received by him) etc.27. An English *noun-noun* combination such as *police enquiry* can, according to context, be an enquiry by the police, to the police, or an enquiry into the police according to context.

26. Proper symbols, acronyms, and signs from other semiotic systems can all be grammatical units.

27. André Martinet made similar points in his analysis of the ergative compared with indo-european case systems.
All of the above cases illustrate the general principle of the conventional linguistic analysis of experience. The position taken here is contrary to that found in logical atomism and universalism. The possibility of expressing the same real-world ordered relation in different linguistic ways shows also that the representation of experience by linguistic means involves prioritisation and prominence given by the speaker. The transfer of a book from John to Mary can be seen as an act of giving with John the prominent actor or an act of receiving with Mary as the focus of attention. The second set of examples illustrates the indeterminacy of linguistic relations. A concrete interpretation depends on intuiting the relation of the named parts of reality in accordance with our real-world experience, as has often been pointed out. A steel hammer may be a hammer made of steel or a tool for hammering steel according to the context but a cheese knife is only likely to be a tool for cutting cheese. However, both sets of examples show the patterned fitting of experience to linguistic orderings. Even an unordered real-world relation, such as equality, is expressed by an ordered grammatical relation. John is as clever as Mary expresses the symmetrical real-world relation of being equal in understanding with a subject → predicate structure and Mary dependent on as... as... The selection of John as the subject reflects the above-mentioned need to identify the focus of attention even in such cases.

To take another example on the larger scale of discourse, when Shakespeare asked Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day? in the famous sonnet 18, he might have answered by saying that the summer’s day was less lovely and less temperate, but the line, Thou art more lovely and more temperate, shows clearly his focus on the addressee in considering the relation between himself, the addressee, and the summer’s day in the relation of comparing. The focus of attention then shifts to the possible negative qualities of the summer’s day in the following lines – Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May/ And summer’s lease hath all too short a date/ Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines. Shakespeare’s lines are a carefully considered construct, but

they show the way different aspects of experience are made prominent in an experience to be communicated. There is also a coherent ordering of the sentences which is superimposed on the ordering by the grammatical patterns. The words *More lovely and more temperate* presuppose the relation of comparison in the first line and there is an obvious semantic (metaphoric and metonymic) coherence of the *darling buds of May* and shining *eye of heaven* with the summer’s day. However, the ordering associated with coherence (and cohesion) is a matter of the logical relations between sentences. The whole adds up to an argument for a negative response to the question in line 1. Of course, the sequencing of information can have effects on the transmission of information and can, thus, also be a « communicational » issue. This is another illustration of the excessively broad potential interpretation of « communication ». However important discoursal features of argument, coherence, and cohesion are to the transmission, they are not part of communication systems (but they are of fundamental importance in ordering experience into what Saussure called the form imparted by language on thought).

Order in grammar often seems to be related to the potential for nominals to have variable functions in relation to signs of constant function and the need to transmit a multi-faceted experience economically (i.e. by using the same set of signs in varying patterns) in a temporal or linear sequence. This implies fixed patterns of rather indeterminate or general meaning and fixed points (function markers such as verbs or prepositions). Furthermore, it is relatively rare to find unordered complexes in grammar. As we have seen, the criteria for identifying them are difficult to apply.

Nevertheless, the concept of order in languages is not redundant. The distinction between symmetrical and asymmetrical complexes is obvious in phonology, and applicable also in grammar. However, the importance of a linguistic ordering of information different from any real-world order is that it is part of the mediation between experience – in its widest sense – and our verbally created « picture » of the world. We have known since Kant that it is the mind which orders experience and not *vice versa*. For Kant, this ordering was related to such universal categories of space and time.
Saussure’s contribution was to show how much our linguistic systems organise thought. For Saussure, pre-linguistic thought was chaotic and amorphous. We now know that it appears so because it is inaccessible to consciousness but also because of the many brain centres vying for control or prominence at a given time. There is a good deal of linguistic processing which is not accessible to conscious awareness and which is not amorphous or chaotic. Saussure helped to make clear the relations of language and thought (as experienced in consciousness), which is the mind’s way of representing its linguistic processing.

We need to consider also the relations of language and the experience to be communicated. The relation of linguistic ordering to real-world events and communicanda is part of that account. It is part of « l’analyse linguistique de l’expérience » and one of the senses of « linguistic function ».