

# Annual report 2016 of ACLC research group: *Functional Discourse Grammar*

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*Coordinator:* Prof. dr. P.C. (Kees) Hengeveld

*Web page:* [FDG](#)

*Current external funding:*

- Kees Hengeveld en Marieke Olthof: NWO PhD's in the humanities (€ 173,000)

*Participants in 2016:*

*ACLC staff*

- Prof. dr. Kees Hengeveld
- Em. prof. dr. Wim Honselaar
- Prof. dr. Caroline Kroon

*ACLC PhD candidates*

- Lois Kemp, MA
- Marieke Olthof, MA
- Marlou van Rijn, MA

*External staff:*

- Dr Hella Olbertz
- Dr Ewa Zakrzewska

*Description of the research group:*

Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG) is a new version of Functional Grammar (FG) (Dik 1997). It models the grammatical competence of individual language users as part of a larger model of the language use. It is envisaged as the grammatical component, alongside a conceptual, a contextual, and an output component, of a larger model of the language user.

FDG models are characterized by five properties:

1. FDG models the grammatical competence of individual language users;
2. FDG takes the discourse act as its basic unit of analysis;
3. FDG distinguishes an interpersonal, a representational, a structural, and a phonological level of linguistic organisation;
4. FDG orders these levels in a top-down fashion;
5. FDG structures each of the levels of linguistic organization being organised hierarchically.

By organizing the grammar in this way, FDG takes the functional approach to language to its logical extreme: within the top-down organization of the grammar, pragmatics governs semantics, pragmatics and semantics govern morphosyntax, and pragmatics, semantics and morphosyntax govern phonology. The development of the model itself draws on the analysis of three types of data, which represent various angles as represented in the ACLC

Language Blueprint research program: description of individual languages, typological research and language contact studies.

*Research highlights in 2016:*

Marlou van Rijn showed in her research that the distinction in FDG between arguments of nouns and modifiers of nouns finds a clear typological reflection: in some languages only arguments of nouns behave like arguments of verbs; and if modifiers of nouns behave like arguments of verbs, then arguments of nouns do too. Marieke Olthof found a new implicational hierarchy that shows that if languages allow the incorporation of more complex units they will also allow the incorporation of less complex units. For instance, if a language allows the incorporation of phrases, it will also allow the incorporation of words and stems. Kees Hengeveld, Wim Honselaar, and Hella Olbertz found more evidence for the idea that grammaticalization is a hierarchical process, in the sense that elements grammaticalize along a pathway that leads from lower layers to higher layers of semantic and pragmatic organization.

*Societal relevance:*

- Kees Hengeveld gave a talk for laymen at the outreach center of the University of Amsterdam *Spui 25*. For a full house he made a number of aspects of FDG accessible to a broad audience.
- After him, Kasper Kok, PhD candidate at the VU University Amsterdam explained to that same audience how he uses FDG to describe gesture.