Structural approach	Functional approach
Focuses on structure of language (a code) as a grammar.	Focuses on structure of speech (as acts, events) as ways of speaking.
Analyzes language structure before any (optional) analysis of language use. Assumes that language use derives from language structure.	Analyzes language use before analysis of language structure. Assumes that language structure and use are integrated; organization of language use reveals additional structural features.
Assumes that the most important function of language is referential, i.e. the use of language to describe the world through propositions.	Assumes that language has a range of functions, including referential, stylistic, and social functions.
Studies the elements and structures of language separately from contexts of use; ignores the culture (ways of acting, thinking, and being) of those using the language.	Studies the elements and structures of language within their contexts of use; attends to the culture (ways of acting, thinking, and being) of those using the language.
Assumes that language structure is independent of social functions and uses. Any language can (potentially) serve any social, cultural, or stylistic purpose.	Assumes that languages, varieties and styles can be adapted to different situations, functions, and uses, and gain different social values for their users.
Assumes that language is a single code within a homogeneous community: each speaker replicates a uniform structure.	Assumes that language comprises a repertoire of speech styles within a diverse community: each speaker adds to an organized matrix of diversity.
Assumes the uniformity of speakers, hearers, actions, events, and communities across world languages.	Seeks to investigate the diversity of speakers, hearers, actions, events, and communities within world languages.

Most linguists who analyze discourse adopt, at least partially, a functional approach to language. This is not surprising: observing and analyzing what people *do* with language leads naturally to an interest in the "work" that language can do – the functions it enables people to perform.