

Lingüística sistémico-funcional

Nociones centrales

Halliday, Michael A. K. y Matthiessen, Christian M. (2004). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, Tercera Edición.
Londres: Arnold.

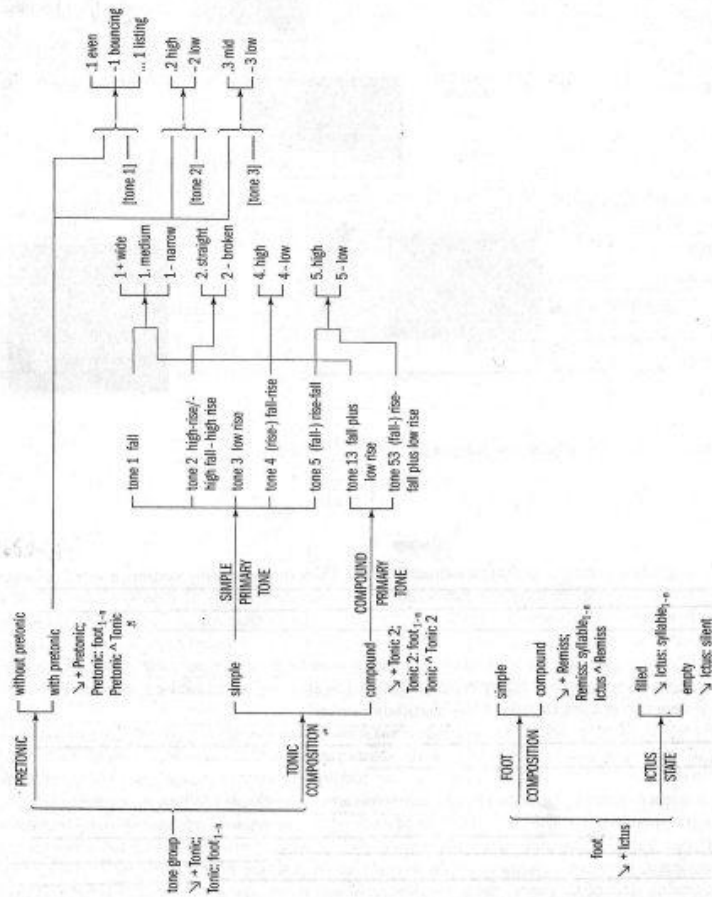
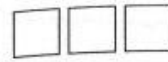


Fig. 1-5 System network for prosodic systems in English phonology



Basic concepts for the study of language

settings of verse also impose a syllable pattern — which is not always the same as that required by the metre.

What is there below the syllable? English verse makes extensive use of rhyme; from that point of view, a syllable consists of two parts, the non-rhyming part, or **Onset** (which may be empty), and the **Rhyme**. This analysis is helpful in explaining the relative duration of different syllables in English, since this depends entirely on the structure of the rhyme. On the other hand, the English writing system is made up of letters, and the letters stand for smaller units of sound called **phonemes** — the individual consonants and vowels out of which both parts of the syllable are built.

The English script is not 'phonemic' if by that we understand a strict one-to-one correspondence between phonemes and letters. It never could be phonemic in this sense, because the criteria for identifying phonemes in English are internally contradictory: what are one and the same phoneme from one point of view may be two separate phonemes from another. But it clearly is phonemic in its general principle: the symbols represent consonants and vowels which contrast systemically with one each other and combine to form regular structures. Many of its symbols have more than one phonemic value; some pairs of letters ('digraphs') have to be treated as single symbols, like *th* in *thin*, *sh* in *shin*; and there are various other departures from an imaginary phonemic ideal, some of them systematic some random. Nevertheless, speakers of English readily become aware of the phoneme as a minimal phonological unit; the fact that there is no one right answer to the question 'How many phonemes are there in English?', and there is indeterminacy where some of them begin and end (is the sound *ch* in *chin* one phoneme or two?), merely brings them into line with all the other constituents in the phonological system — syllables, feet and tone groups — and, it might be added, with most other phenomena pertaining to natural languages.

In this book we shall not need to be concerned with the detailed analysis of syllables and phonemes. For discussion of the grammar, the important part of phonology is prosody — features of intonation and rhythm. The transcription that will be needed is one which shows the intonational and rhythmic features of speech but which uses ordinary orthography for the spelling — an elaboration of the conventions introduced in the previous section.

1.3 Basic concepts for the study of language

The discussion so far has raised a number of theoretical issues, as can be seen from the variety of technical terms that have had to be used. We have referred to language (i) as text and as system, (ii) as sound, as writing and as wording, (iii) as structure — configurations of parts and (iv) as resource — choices among alternatives. These are some of the different guises in which a language presents itself when we start to explore its grammar in functional terms: that is, from the standpoint of how it creates and expresses meaning.

At this point, we begin to need a map: some overview of language that will enable us to locate exactly where we are at any point along the route. A characteristic of the approach we are adopting here, that of systemic theory, is that it is *comprehensive*: it is concerned with language in its entirety, so that whatever is said about one aspect is to be understood always with reference to the total picture. At the same time, of course, what is being said about any

English script is not phonemic

Systemic maps

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one aspect also *contributes* to the total picture; but in that respect as well it is important to recognize where everything fits in. There are many reasons for adopting this systemic perspective; one is that languages evolve — they are not designed, and evolved systems cannot be explained simply as the sum of their parts. Our traditional compositional thinking about language needs to be, if not replaced by, at least complemented by a 'systems' thinking whereby we seek to understand the nature and the dynamic of a semiotic system as a whole (cf. Matthiessen and Halliday, in prep., Chapter 1, and references therein to Capra, 1996, and other proponents of systems thinking).

In the remainder of this chapter we shall present in a very summary way the critical dimensions of the kind of semiotic that language is. By 'language' we mean natural, human, adult, verbal language — natural as opposed to designed semiotics like mathematics and computer languages (cf. Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999: 29–46); adult (i.e. post-infancy) as opposed to infant protolanguages (see Halliday, 1975); verbal as opposed to music, dance and other languages of art (cf. Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996; O'Toole, 1994; van Leeuwen, 2000). Of course, all these other systems share certain features with language in this specified sense; but none of them incorporates all. The dimensions, or forms of order, in a language, and the ordering principles, are set out in Table 1(3) and Figure 1-6.

Table 1(3) The dimensions (forms of order) in language and their ordering principles

	dimension	principle	orders
1	structure (syntagmatic order)	rank	clause ~ group or phrase ~ word ~ morpheme [i.g.]
2	system (paradigmatic order)	delicacy	grammar ~ lexis [lexicogrammar]
3	stratification	realization	semantics ~ lexicogrammar ~ phonology ~ phonetics
4	instantiation	instantiation	potential ~ sub-potential or instance type ~ instance
5	metafunction	metafunction	ideational [logical ~ experimental] ~ interpersonal ~ textual

1.3.1 Structure (syntagmatic order)

This is the compositional aspect of language, referred to in linguistic terminology as 'constituency'. The ordering principle, as defined in systemic theory, is that of rank: compositional layers, rather few in number, organized by the relationship of 'is a part of'. We have identified four such compositional hierarchies in English (Table 1(4)).

Table 1(4) Compositional hierarchies in English

	domain	compositional hierarchy
a	in sound:	tone group ~ foot (rhythm group) ~ syllable (~ hemisyllable) ~ phoneme
b	in writing:	sentence ~ sub-sentence ~ word (written) ~ letter
c	in verse (spoken):	stanza ~ line ~ foot (metric) ~ syllable
d	in grammar:	clause ~ phrase or group ~ word ~ morpheme

Basic concepts for the study of language

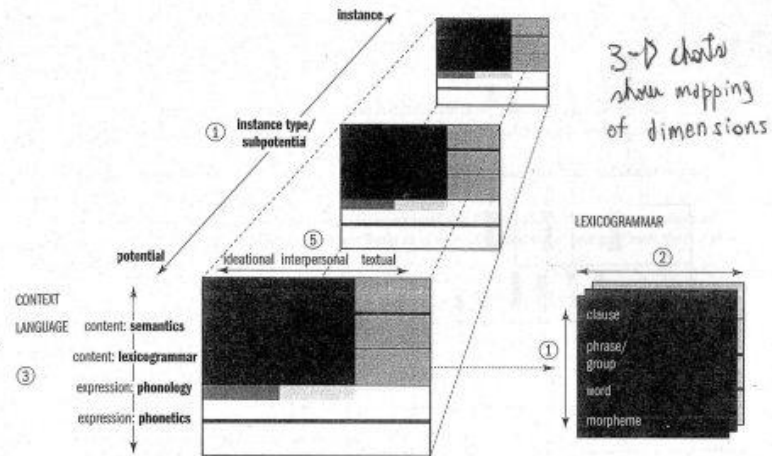


Fig. 1-6 The dimensions in language

The guiding principle is that of exhaustiveness: thus, in the writing system, a word consists of a whole number of letters, a sub-sentence of a whole number of words, a sentence of a whole number of sub-sentences; the number may be more than one, or just one. At the same time, as always in language, there is much indeterminacy, or room for manoeuvre: should we recognize just one layer of sub-sentences, marked off by any punctuation mark, or two — a higher layer marked off by (semi)colons, a lower one marked off by commas? This may well depend on the practice of the particular writer.

As we have seen, all these compositional hierarchies are ultimately variants of a single motif: the organization of meaning in the grammar. As the language has evolved, they have drifted apart (as will tend to happen in the history of every language); but traces of their equivalence remain (e.g. tone group : sub-sentence : line : clause). When we come to analyse the grammar, we find that the structure of each unit is an organic configuration so that each part has a distinctive function with respect to the whole; and that some units may form complexes, iterative sequences working together as a single part. Grammar is the central processing unit of language, the powerhouse where meanings are created; it is natural that the systems of sound and of writing through which these meanings are expressed should reflect the structural arrangement of the grammar. They cannot, obviously, copy the functional configurations; but they do maintain the grammatical principle that units of

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different rank construe patterns of different kinds. In English phonology, for example, the foot is the unit of rhythm; it is the constituent which regulates the pulse of continuous speech. In this it is distinct from other units both above it and below it: from the syllable, which organizes the articulatory sequences of vowels and consonants, and from the tone group, which organizes the pitch movement into patterns of intonation. This functional specialization among units of different rank is a feature of the structure of language as a whole.

1.3.2 System (paradigmatic order)

Structure is the syntagmatic ordering in language: patterns, or regularities, in what goes together with what. System, by contrast, is ordering on the other axis: patterns in what could go instead of what. This is the paradigmatic ordering in language (cf. Halliday, 1966a; Fawcett, 1988; Butt and Matthiessen, forthc.).

Any set of alternatives, together with its condition of entry, constitutes a system in this technical sense. An example would be 'all clauses are either positive or negative', or more fully 'all clauses select in the system of POLARITY whose terms are positive and negative', diagrammatically as in Figure 1-7. To get a more rounded picture, we attach probabilities to the two terms: 'positive, 0.9; negative, 0.1' (cf. Halliday and James, 1993).

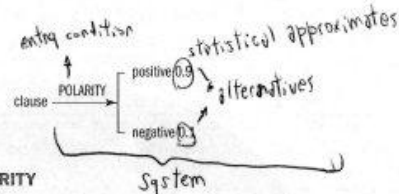


Fig. 1-7 The system of POLARITY

It will be clear that this is a more abstract representation than that of structure, since it does not depend on how the categories are expressed. Positive and negative are contrasting features of the clause, which could be made manifest in many different ways. They represent an aspect of the meaning potential of the language, and they are mutually defining: 'not positive' means the same thing as 'negative' and 'not negative' means the same thing as 'positive'.

The relationship on which the system is based is 'is a kind of': a clause having the feature 'positive' is a kind of clause. Suppose we now take a further step, and say that negative clauses may be either generalized negative, like they didn't know, or some specific kind of negative like they never knew or nobody knew. Here, we have recognized two paradigmatic contrasts, one being more refined than the other (Figure 1-8). The relationship between these two systems is one of delicacy: the second one is 'more delicate than' the first. Delicacy in the system ('is a kind of a kind of...') is the analogue of rank in the structure ('is a part of a part of...').

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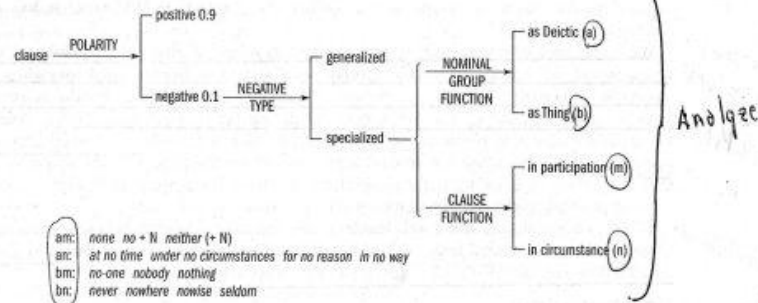


Fig. 1-8 The system of POLARITY, next step in delicacy

A text is the product of ongoing selection in a very large network of systems — a system network. Systemic theory gets its name from the fact that the grammar of a language is represented in the form of system networks, not as an inventory of structures. Of course, structure is an essential part of the description; but it is interpreted as the outward form taken by systemic choices, not as the defining characteristic of language. A language is a resource for making meaning, and meaning resides in systemic patterns of choice.

The way system and structure go together can be illustrated by showing a simplified version of the system network for MOOD (this will be explained in detail in Chapter 4): see Figure 1-9. This can be read as follows. A clause is either major or minor in STATUS; if major, it has a Predicator in its structure. A major clause is either indicative or imperative in MOOD; if indicative, it has a Finite (operator) and a Subject. An indicative clause is either declarative or interrogative (still in MOOD); if declarative, the Subject comes before the Finite. An interrogative clause is either yes/no type or WH-

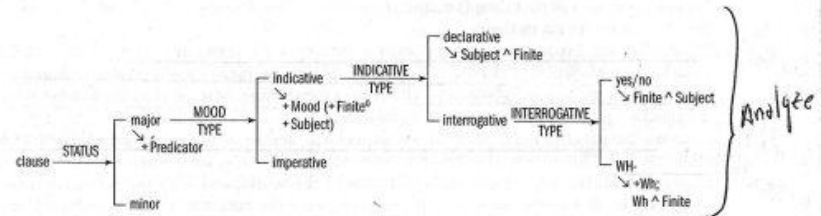


Fig. 1-9 The MOOD system network

type; if yes/no type, the Finite comes before the Subject; if WH-type, it has a Wh element.

What this means is that each system — each moment of choice — contributes to the formation of the structure. Of course, there is no suggestion here of conscious choice; the 'moments' are analytic steps in the grammar's construal of meaning (for the relationship between semantic choice and what goes on in the brain; see Lamb, 1999). Structural operations — inserting elements, ordering elements and so on — are explained as realizing systemic choices. So when we analyse a text, we show the functional organization of its structure; and we show what meaningful choices have been made, each one seen in the context of what might have been meant but was not.

When we speak of structural features as 'realizing' systemic choices, this is one manifestation of a general relationship that pervades every quarter of language. Realization derives from the fact that a language is a stratified system.

1.3.3 Stratification

We are accustomed to talking about language under different headings. School grammar books used to have chapters on pronunciation, orthography, morphology (earlier 'accidence') and syntax, with a vocabulary added at the end. This acknowledged the fact that a language is a complex semiotic system, having various levels, or strata. We have made the same assumption here, referring to the sound system, the writing system and the wording system, that is, phonology, orthography (or graphology) and grammar. (We also noted, on the other hand, that grammar and vocabulary are not different strata; they are the two poles of a single continuum, properly called lexicogrammar (cf. Hasan, 1987). Similarly, syntax and morphology are not different strata; they are both part of grammar — the distinction evolved because in Indo-European languages the structure of words (morphology) tends to be strikingly different from the structure of clauses (syntax); but this is not a feature of languages in general.)

What does it mean to say that these are different 'strata'? In infants' protolanguage, which has as yet no grammar in it, the elements are simple signs; for example, a meaning 'give me that' is expressed directly by a sound, like *nananana*, or maybe by a gesture of some kind. Here, we have just two strata, a stratum of content and a stratum of expression (cf. Halliday, 1975).

Adult languages are more complex. For one thing, they may have two alternative modes of expression, one of sounding (i.e. speech) and one of writing. More significantly, however, they have more strata in them.

The 'content' expands into two, a lexicogrammar and a semantics (cf. Halliday, 1984a; Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999). This is what allows the meaning potential of a language to expand, more or less indefinitely. The reason for this can best be explained in terms of the functions that language serves in human lives.

We use language to make sense of our experience, and to carry out our interactions with other people. This means that the grammar has to interface with what goes on outside language: with the happenings and conditions of the world, and with the social processes we engage in. But at the same time it has to organize the construal of experience, and the enactment of social processes, so that they can be transformed into wording. The way it does this is by splitting the task into two. In step one, the interfacing part, experience and

Systems, choices and LAMB

Realization

3

Strata

protolanguage is re-grammatised

content

main interactions

interpersonal relationships are transformed into meaning; this is the stratum of semantics. In step two, the meaning is further transformed into wording; this is the stratum of lexicogrammar. This is, of course, expressing it from the point of view of a speaker, or writer; for a listener, or reader, the steps are the other way round.

This stratification of the content plane had immense significance in the evolution of the human species — it is not an exaggeration to say that it turned *homo ...* into *homo sapiens* (cf. Halliday, 1995b; Matthiessen, in press b). It opened up the power of language and in so doing created the modern human brain. Some sense of its consequences for the construction of knowledge will be given in Chapter 10, where we raise the question whether learned forms of discourse, in education, science, technology and the humanities, could ever have evolved without the 'decoupling' of these two aspects of the semogenic process.

It might be asked whether an analogous stratification took place within the expression plane; and the answer would appear to be yes, it did, and for analogous reasons, namely separating the organizing function from the function of interfacing with the environment. Here, however, the environment is the human body, the biological resource with which sounding (or signing) is carried out. Taking sound (spoken language) as the base, the stratification is into phonetics, the interfacing with the body's resources for speech and for hearing, and phonology, the organization of speech sound into formal structures and systems (Figure 1-10).

Stratification put the sapiens in 'homo'

Phonetics ≠ Phonology

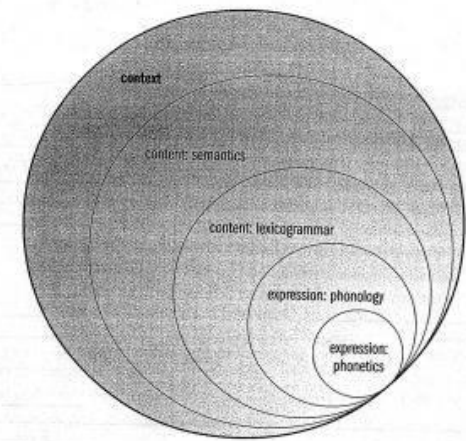


Fig. 1-10 Stratification



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When we say that language is stratified in this way, we mean that this is how we have to model language if we want to explain it. A language is a series of redundancies by which we link our ecosocial environment to nonrandom disturbances in the air (soundwaves). Each step is, of course, masterminded by the brain. The relationship among the strata — the process of linking one level of organization with another — is called **realization**.^{*} Table 1(5) presents this model from the point of view of the speaker — it is hard to present it in a way that is neutral between speaking and listening. Figure 1-10 represents the stratal organization of language, and shows how the stratified linguistic system is 'embedded' in context (cf. Halliday, 1978; Halliday and Hasan, 1985; Martin, 1992).

Table 1(5) From ecosocial environment to soundwaves: speaker perspective

[from environment to] meaning:	interfacing, via receptors	semantics
[from meaning to] wording:	internal organization	lexicogrammar
[from wording to] composing:	internal organization	phonology
[from composing to] sounding:	interfacing, via motors	phonetics

1.3.4 Instantiation

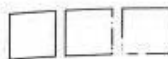
When we want to explain how language is organized, and how its organization relates to the function it fulfils in human life, we often find it difficult to make things clear; and this is because we are trying to maintain two perspectives at once. One perspective is that of **language as system**; the other perspective is that of **language as text**.

The concept we need here is that of **instantiation**. The system of a language is 'instantiated' in the form of **text**. A text may be a trivial service encounter, like ordering coffee, or it may be a momentous event in human history, like Nelson Mandela's inaugural speech; in either case, and whatever its intrinsic value, it is an instance of an underlying system, and has no meaningful existence except as such. A text in English has no semiotic standing other than by reference to the system of English (which is why it has no meaning for you if you do not know the language).

The system is the underlying potential of a language: its potential as a meaning-making resource.^{**} This does not mean that it exists as an independent phenomenon: there are not two separate objects, language as system and language as a set of texts. The relationship between the two is **analogous to that between the weather and the climate** (cf. Halliday, 1992b). Climate and weather are not two different phenomena; rather, they are the same

^{*} With a primary semiotic system, like the infant protolanguage, consisting only of content and expression, we could still use the word 'express'. But with a higher order (multistratal) semiotic this is no longer appropriate; we could not really say that wording 'expresses' meaning. Hence the use of a distinct technical term.

^{**} This use of 'system' is thus different from — although related to — its meaning as a technical term in the grammar (Section 1.3.2 above). The system in this general sense is equivalent to the totality of all the specific systems that would figure in a comprehensive network covering every stratum.



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phenomenon seen from different standpoints of the observer. What we call 'climate' is weather seen from a greater depth of time — it is what is instantiated in the form of weather. The weather is the text: it is what goes on around us all the time, impacting on, and sometimes disturbing, our daily lives. The climate is the system, the potential that underlies these variable effects.

Why then do we refer to them as different things? We can see why, if we consider some recent arguments about global warming; the question is asked: is this a long-term weather pattern, or is it a blip in the climate? What this means is, can we explain global warming in terms of some general theory (in this case, of climatic change), or is it just a set of similar events? An analogous question about language would be if we took a corpus of, say, writings by political scientists and asked, are these just a set of similar texts, or do they represent a sub-system of the language? The climate is the *theory* of the weather. As such, it does have its own separate existence — but (like all theoretical entities) it exists on the semiotic plane. It is a virtual thing. Similarly with the system of language: this is language as a virtual thing; it is not the sum of all possible texts but a theoretical entity to which we can assign certain properties and which we can invest with considerable explanatory power.

System and text are thus related through instantiation. Like the relationship between climate and weather, the relationship between system and text is a **cline** — the **cline of instantiation** (Figure 1-11). System and text define the two poles of the cline — that of the overall potential and that of a particular instance. Between these two poles there are intermediate patterns. These patterns can be viewed either from the system pole as **sub-systems**, or from the instance pole, as **instance types**. If we start at the instance pole, we can study a single text, and then look for other texts that are like it according to certain criteria. When we study this sample of texts, we can identify patterns that they all share, and describe these in terms of a **text type**. By identifying a text type, we are moving along the cline of instantiation away from the text pole towards the system pole. The criteria we use when we compare the texts in our sample could, in principle, come from any of the strata of language — as long as they are systematic and explicit. However, research has shown that texts vary systematically according to contextual values: texts vary according to the nature of the contexts they are used in. Thus recipes, weather forecasts, stock market reports, rental agreements, e-mail messages, inaugural speeches, service encounters in the local deli, news bulletins, media interviews, tutorial sessions, walking tours in a guide book, gossip during a tea break, advertisements, bedtime stories and all the other innumerable text types we meet in life are all ways of using language in different contexts. Looked at from the system pole of the cline of instantiation, they can be interpreted as **registers**. A register is a functional variety of language (Halliday, 1978) — the patterns of instantiation of the overall system associated with a given type of context (a **situation type**).^{*} These patterns of instantiation show up quantitatively as adjustments in the systemic probabilities of language; a register can be represented as a particular setting of systemic

^{*} Here, the term 'register' thus refers to a functional variety of language. It has also been used in a related, but different way, to refer to the contextual values associated with such a functional variety (see Martin, 1992; cf. Matthiessen, 1993).

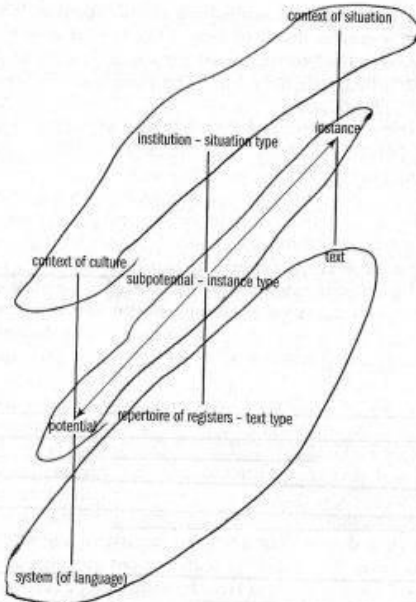


Fig. 1-11 The cline of instantiation

probabilities. For example, the future tense is very much more likely to occur in weather forecasts than it is in stories (for examples of quantitative profiles of registers, see Matthiessen, 2002b, in press a).

If we now come back to the question of stratification, we can perhaps see more clearly what it means to say that the semantic stratum is language interfacing with the non-linguistic (prototypically material) world. Most texts in adult life do not relate directly to the objects and events in their environment. Mandela's text was highly abstract, and even when he talked about *the soil of this beautiful country* and *the jacaranda trees of Pretoria*, it is very unlikely that he could actually see them at the time. They were not a part of the setting in that instance. Nevertheless, the meanings that are realized by these wordings, and the meanings realized by *an extraordinary human disaster* and *humanity's belief in justice* are, ultimately, construals of human experience; and when we now read or listen to that text we are understanding it as just that. Interfacing with the ecosocial environment is a property of language as system; it is also, crucially, a feature of those instances through which small children come to master the system; but it is not something that is re-enacted

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in every text. Experience is remembered, imagined, abstracted, metaphorized and mythologized — the text has the power to create its own environment; but it has this power because of the way they system has evolved, by making meaning out of the environment as it was given.

As grammarians we have to be able to shift our perspective, observing now from the system standpoint and now from that of the text; and we have to be aware at which point we are standing at any time. This issue has been strongly foregrounded by the appearance of the computerized corpus. A corpus is a large collection of instances — of spoken and written texts; the corpuses now available contain enough data to give significantly new insights into the grammar of English, provided the data can be processed and interpreted. But the corpus does not write the grammar for you, any more than the data from experiments in the behaviour of light wrote Newton's *Opticks* for him; it has to be theorized. Writing a description of a grammar entails constant shunting between the perspective of the system and the perspective of the instance. We have tried in this edition to take account of the new balance that has arisen as a result of data becoming accessible to grammarians in sufficient quantity for the first time in the two and a half millennia history of the subject.

The grammar and corpus

5

1.3.5 Metafunction

This brings us back to the question asked in Section 1.3.3: what are the basic functions of language, in relation to our ecological and social environment? We suggested two: making sense of our experience, and acting out our social relationships.

It is clear that language does — as we put it — **construe** human experience. It names things, thus **construing** them into categories; and then, typically, goes further and **construes** the categories into **taxonomies**, often using more names for doing so. So we have *houses* and *cottages* and *garages* and *sheds*, which are all kinds of *building*; *strolling* and *stepping* and *marching* and *pacing*, which are all kinds of *walking*; *in*, *on*, *under*, *around* as relative locations and so on — and the fact that these differ from one language to another is a reminder that the categories are in fact **construed in language** (cf. Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999: Chapter 7; Caffarel, Martin and Matthiessen, in press). More powerfully still, these elements are configured into complex grammatical patterns like *marched out of the house*; the figures can be built up into sequences related by time, cause and the like — **there is no facet of human experience which cannot be transformed into meaning**. In other words, language provides a **theory of human experience**, and certain of the resources of the lexicogrammar of every language are dedicated to that function. We call it the **ideational metafunction**, and distinguish it into two components, the **experiential** and the **logical** (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 7).

Construed of experience

At the same time, whenever we use language there is always something else going on. While **construing**, language is always also **enacting**: enacting our personal and social relationships with the other people around us. The clause of the grammar is not only a figure, representing some process — some doing or happening, saying or sensing, being or having — with its various participants and circumstances; it is also a **proposition**, or a **proposal**, whereby we inform or question, give an order or make an offer, and express our **appraisal of and attitude towards whoever we are addressing and what we are talking about**. This kind of meaning is more active: if the ideational function of the grammar is 'language

Ideational is experiential + logical
enacting relations
Interpersonal

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as reflection', this is 'language as action'. We call it the **interpersonal metafunction**, to suggest that it is both interactive and personal (see Chapter 4).

This distinction between two modes of meaning is not just made from outside; when the grammar is represented systemically, it shows up as two distinct networks of systems (Halliday, 1969; cf. Martin, 1990, on intrinsic functionality). What it signifies is that (1) every message is both about something and addressing someone, and (2) these two motifs can be freely combined — by and large, they do not constrain each other. But the grammar also shows up a third component, another mode of meaning which relates to the construction of text. In a sense this can be regarded as an enabling or facilitating function, since both the others — **construing experience** and enacting interpersonal relations — depend on being able to build up sequences of discourse, organizing the discursive flow and creating cohesion and continuity as it moves along. This too appears as a clearly delineated motif within the grammar. We call it the **textual metafunction** (see Chapter 3 and Chapter 9) (Figure 1-12).

Why this rather unwieldy term 'metafunction'? We could have called them simply 'functions'; however, there is a long tradition of talking about the functions of language in

external
construction
of
text

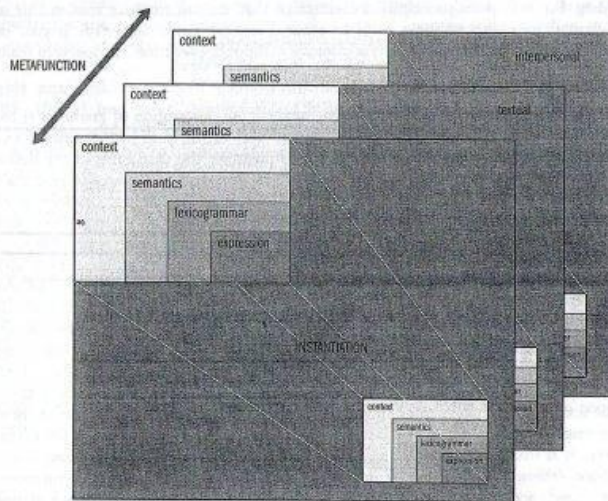
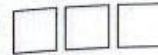


Fig. 1-12 Metafunction



The location of grammar in language; the role of the corpus

contexts where 'function' simply means purpose or way of using language, and has no significance for the analysis of language itself (cf. Halliday and Hasan, 1985: Chapter 1; Martin, 1990). But the systemic analysis shows that functionality is intrinsic to language: that is to say, the entire architecture of language is arranged along functional lines. Language is as it is because of the functions in which it has evolved in the human species. The term 'metafunction' was adopted to suggest that function was an integral component within the overall theory.

language
'or'
functional
to the
species

1.4 The location of grammar in language; the role of the corpus

1.4.1 Recapitulation: locating the present work on the map of language

This is not exactly a recapitulation; rather, the aim is to locate the present work in relation to the dimensions of language discussed in the previous section.

In terms of **stratification**, the book deals with lexicogrammar, the stratum of wording. If we use the familiar metaphor of vertical space, as implied in the word 'stratum', the stratum 'above' is the semantics, that 'below' is the phonology. We cannot expect to understand the grammar just by looking at it from its own level; we also look into it 'from above' and 'from below', taking a **trinocular perspective**. But since the view from these different angles is often conflicting, the description will inevitably be a form of compromise. All linguistic description involves such compromise; the difference between a systemic description and one in terms of traditional school grammar is that in the school grammars the compromise was random and unprincipled, whereas in a systemic grammar it is systematic and theoretically motivated. Being a 'functional grammar' means that priority is given to the view 'from above'; that is, grammar is seen as a resource for making meaning — it is a 'semanticky' kind of grammar. But the focus of attention is still on the grammar itself.

functional
grammar
are
semanticky

Giving priority to the view 'from above' means that the organizing principle adopted is that of **system**; the grammar is seen as a network of interrelated meaningful choices. In other words, the **dominant axis is the paradigmatic one**: the fundamental components of the grammar are sets of mutually defining contrastive features. Explaining something consists not of stating how it is structured but in showing how it is related to other things: its pattern of **systemic relationships, or agnateness (agnation)**.

meaning
or
choice

Each system has its point of origin at a particular **rank**: **clause, phrase, group** and their associated complexes. Since the clause is the primary channel of grammatical energy, the first part of the book deals with systems of the clause. The second part deals with systems at other ranks; and also those of the information unit, which is the grammatical reflex of the phonological tone group. The final chapter will describe movement across the rank scale, one of the forms taken by grammatical metaphor.

Systems at every rank are located in their **metafunctional context**; this means, therefore, that every system has its address in some cell of a **metafunction — rank matrix**, as shown schematically in Figure 1-13 and in more detail in Chapter 2, Table 2(8) (p. 63). For

metafunction
and
matrix

* This was true of the earlier editions also. But there the grammar was presented in the form of structure, whereas in this edition we have introduced the category of system into the ongoing account.

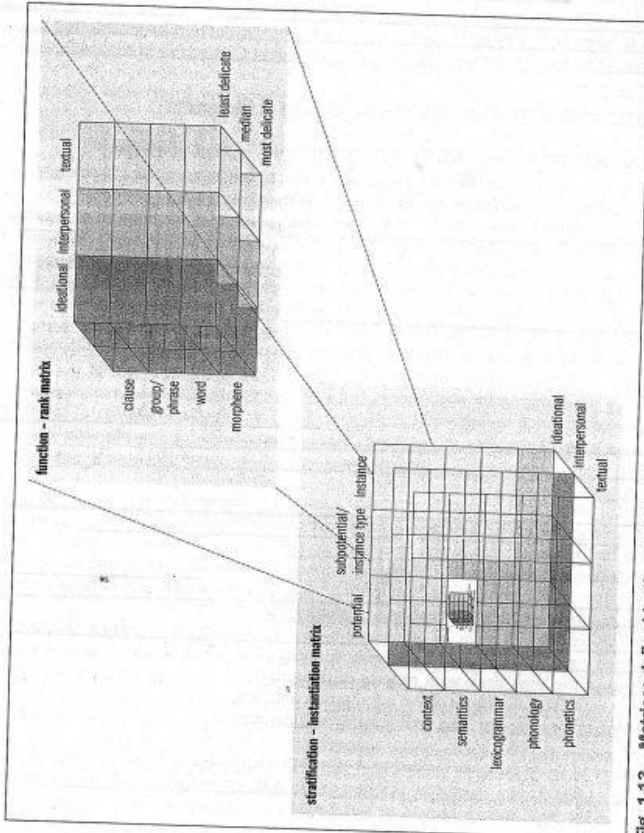


Fig. 1-13 Matrices defined by the semiotic dimensions: the lexicogrammatical function - rank matrix in relation to the stratification - instantiation matrix

Functional structure



The location of grammar in language: the role of the corpus

example the system of MOOD, referred to above, is an interpersonal system of the clause; so it is located in the 'clause' row, 'interpersonal' column in the matrix.

Structure is analysed in functional terms, explaining the part played by each element in the organic configuration of the whole. We shall see later on that the configurational view of structure is oversimplified, if not distorted, because the way linguistic units are structured tends to vary according to metafunction (see Halliday, 1979; Martin, 1996; Matthiessen, 1988). But it is possible to reduce all types of structure to a configurational form, as a strategy for exploring the grammar.

Figure 1-13 provides a map of this general conceptual framework. It also shows the dimension of instantiation; and this is the route by which we return to the text. In preparing this new edition we have made considerable use of a corpus, to check the details and extend the scope of the description; and also as a source of authentic examples. Whenever we shift our perspective between text and system — between data and theory — we are moving along this instantiation cline. The system, as we have said, is the potential that lies behind the text.

But 'text' is a complex notion. In the form in which we typically receive it, as spoken and written discourse, a text is the product of two processes combined: instantiation and realization. The defining criterion is instantiation: text as instance. But realization comes in because what becomes accessible to us is the text as realized in sound or writing. We cannot directly access instances of language at higher strata — as selections in meaning, or even in wording. But it is perhaps helpful to recognize that we can produce text in this way, for ourselves, if we compose some verse or other discourse inside our heads. If you 'say it to yourself', you can get the idea of text as instance without the additional property of realization.

1.4.2 Text and the corpus

Text is the form of data used for linguistic analysis; all description of grammar is based on text. Traditionally, this has been mainly 'virtual' text of the kind just described: examples made up by grammarians inside their heads to illustrate the categories of the description. The only 'real' text that was available was written text, and some notable grammarians of English, such as Otto Jespersen, made considerable use of written texts as sources of data.

In the late 1940s two inventions appeared which were to change the work of a grammarian: tape recorders and computers. The tape recorder made it possible to capture spontaneous speech; the computer made it possible to store and access data in increasing quantities. Ten years later, when Randolph Quirk at the University of London and W. Freeman Twaddell at Brown University in Providence, USA designed and began to implement the first corpora of written text, they foresaw that the operation would soon become computerized. At the same time grammarians such as Halliday were recording natural speech and analysing it for intonation and rhythm (Halliday, 1963a,b, 1967). We now have indefinitely large computerized corpora of both written and spoken text.

The text is typically presented in written form, on the screen or else printed as hard copy. If the original was written, its format is — or at least can be — preserved. If the original was spoken, it is usually transcribed into regular orthography; this has two drawbacks, one of omission (there is no record of intonation and rhythm) and one of commission (it is 'normalized' according to conventions designed to make it look as though it had been composed in writing) — thus for a grammarian it has rather limited value. It is still not automatically made available as speech.

This is, after all, an analytical grammar

problems of oral text transcription

THE ARCHITECTURE OF LANGUAGE

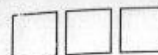
The corpus is fundamental to the enterprise of theorizing language. Until now, linguistics has been like physics before 1600: having little reliable data, and no clear sense of the relationship between observation and theory. But precisely because the corpus is so important it is better to be aware of what is good about it, and also what is potentially not so good. Let us enumerate four points — three plusses and one minus — which relate particularly to our use of the corpus.

First, its data are authentic. This one property underlies all its other advantages. What people actually say is very different from what they think they say; and even more different from what they think they ought to say (Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens, 1964). Similarly, what people say or understand under experimental conditions is very different from what they say or understand in real life (for example, children 4-5 were found, when they were probed, not to understand or be able to produce relative clauses and passives; whereas these appear regularly in the natural speech of children before the age of 2). The difference is less marked in writing, although it is still there. Would Jane Austen (or our own teachers in school) have acknowledged the 'double -ing' form she used in Mansfield Park: *But it would rather do her good after being stooping among the roses; . . . ?* [New York: Hyperion, n.d., p. 64]. But it is in speech that authenticity becomes critical; and this leads us to the second point.

Second, its data include spoken language, ranging from fairly formal or at least self-monitored speech (as in interviews) to casual, spontaneous chatter. The reason this is so important is not, as people sometimes think, a sort of inverted scale of values in reaction against earlier attitudes that dismissed everyday speech as formless and incoherent; it is a more positive factor — namely, that not only is natural spoken language every whit as highly organized as writing (it is simply organized along somewhat different lines; Halliday, 1985, 1987a) but, more significantly, it is in the most unself-monitored spontaneous speech that people explore and expand their meaning potential. It is here that we reach the semantic frontiers of language and get a sense of the directions in which its grammar is moving.

There is another point that should be brought in here. Now that spontaneous speech is becoming available for study,* some grammarians propose to write separate grammars for it. This approach has the merit that it can highlight special features of spoken language and show that it is systematic and highly organized; but it tends to exaggerate the difference between speech and writing, and to obscure the fact that they are varieties within a unitary system. Spoken and written English are both forms of English — otherwise you could not have all the mixed and intermediate forms that are evolving in electronic text. In my own work, including earlier editions of this book, I have always taken account of both, with a slight bias towards spoken language for reasons given above; I have wanted to preserve the underlying unity of the two. Either way, what matters is that spoken language can now occupy the place in linguistic scholarship that it must do if the theory is to continue to advance.

* Though now that technological obstacles have gone, legal ones have arisen. If you record surreptitiously, you lay yourself open to being sued.



The location of grammar in language; the role of the corpus

3. Third, the corpus makes it possible to study grammar in quantitative terms. It is clear by this time that grammatical systems are probabilistic in nature: that, for example, the system of POLARITY in English has to be modelled not simply as 'positive or negative' but as 'positive or negative with a certain probability attached' (which has been found to be of the order of 0.9:0.1).* Computerized parsing and pattern-matching is now reaching the point where quantitative studies can be undertaken of a number of primary systems in the grammar, using samples large enough to permit comparison among different registers (where it seems likely that probabilities may be systematically reset). Not enough work has yet been undertaken along these lines for us to build it in to the total picture; but it is a high priority field for future research.

What then is the problematic aspect of the large-scale corpus? Linguists who specialize in corpus studies tend to refer to themselves, rather disingenuously, as 'mere data-gatherers'. We doubt whether they truly deceive themselves; they are well aware of the theoretical significance of what they are doing and what they are finding out. But they may perhaps deceive others, encouraging them to believe that there is some disjunction between data-gathering and theorizing. It is just such a dichotomy that has hassled the linguistics of the past few decades, isolating the system of language from the text as if they were two different orders of phenomena.** Of course, new data from the corpus will pose problems for any theory, systemic theory included — as Jones said, 'a science without difficulties is not a science at all' (Jones, 1999: 152). But such data will not contribute towards raising our understanding unless cultured by stock from within the pool of theoretical knowledge.

We emphasize this because there was a strong current of anti-theoretical ideology in late twentieth century thinking, at least in certain intellectual domains. This was part of a self-conscious post-modern reaction against 'grand designs'; as often happens in such shifts of fashion, what starts out as a steadying correction to the course of knowledge becomes a lurch to a position more extreme than that which it was correcting. All modelling becomes micromodelling, all categories become collections of instances. We share the commitment to data and to the study of small-scale phenomena, in semiotic systems as in systems of any kind. But to banish the macro and the system from one's thinking is simply to indulge in another kind of grand design; being 'atheoretical' disguises a particular theoretical conviction which in our view is ill-judged and ill-informed (cf. Halliday and Martin, 1993: Chapter 11). We would argue for a dialectical complementarity between theory and data: complementarity because some phenomena

* See Halliday and James (1993); also Halliday (1993a), Nesbitt and Plum (1988), Matthiessen (1999, in press).

** A 'corpus-based grammar' is fine; there is no excuse now for a grammar of a well-researched language such as English not to be corpus-based. A 'corpus grammar' would seem to be a contradiction in terms, if it means a grammar emerging by itself out of the corpus. Data do not spontaneously generate theory. Some corpus specialists now favour a 'corpus-driven' approach (cf. Tognini Bonelli, 2001). In the terms described, the present grammar would, we think, qualify as corpus-driven; the difference would lie in the relative weight given to a general linguistic theory (and to the place of theory in scientific praxis). We make more use of the explanatory power of a comprehensive model of language. In this connection, it is also important to emphasize that the present grammar has been tested extensively against authentic text in a way most 'corpus-based grammars' never are: it has been applied in systematic and exhaustive analysis of large volumes of text.

show up best if illuminated by a general theory (i.e. from the 'system' end), others if treated as patterns within the data (i.e. from the 'instance' end) (cf. on global warming, above); dialectical because each perspective interpenetrates with and constantly redefines the other. This is the kind of thinking we have tried to adopt throughout the present work.

CHAPTER TWO

TOWARDS A FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

2.1 Towards a grammatical analysis

Let us take a passage of three sentences from the transcript of Nelson Mandela's speech and start exploring its lexicogrammar:

To my compatriots I have no hesitation in saying that each of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld.

Each time one of us touches the soil of this land, we feel a sense of personal renewal. The national mood changes as the seasons change.

We are moved by a sense of joy and exhilaration when the grass turns green and the flowers bloom.

Starting at the lexical end — with the 'content words' of the vocabulary — we find names of entities (persons and things), names of processes (actions, events, etc.) and names of qualities:

1 *Names of entities:*

(a) common names:

persons
things, concrete, general

things, concrete, specific
things, abstract

(b) proper names:

compatriots
soil, country, trees, bushveld, land, grass,
flowers
jacaranda, mimosa
hesitation, sense, renewal, mood, seasons,
joy, exhilaration

Pretoria