

University of British Columbia
Department of Language and Literacy Education

LLED 565A/921 Summer Term 1, 2009

Grammar, Texts and Discourse in Education

This course is designed to help you use specific analyses of language in teaching and research. It adopts a particular theoretical perspective, systemic functional linguistics.

In the early 1960s systemic functional linguistics (SFL) was developed as a general theory of language, together with an embryonic theory of grammar, by the British linguist, Michael Halliday. Educational practice was always at the centre of Halliday's interest, though the theory has been used to assist research and practice in many different contexts in the forty years since it was first introduced. Its roots lie in European semiotic theory, in Firth's general linguistic theory, developed in London, and in North American anthropological linguistics, particularly the work of Sapir and Whorf. It is important to note that SFL is a general theory of language, not just a theory of English, though the initial grammatical description was developed for English. Grammatical descriptions of many other languages have now been written from an SFL perspective, including Japanese, Mandarin, French and Oko, a language of Central Nigeria. International interest in the theory expanded substantially following the publication of four cornerstone works: a) *Learning how to mean* (1975), a study of a child's very early language development from a meaning perspective; b) *Language as social semiotic* (1976); c) *Cohesion in English* (1976, co-authored with R. Hasan); and d) *An introduction to functional grammar* (1985; 3rd. ed. 2004, co-authored with C. Matthiessen). Halliday's 10-volume *Collected Works* has now been published by Continuum, including a volume of educational linguistics. Professor Halliday was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of British Columbia in 2007, in recognition of his service to educational linguistics.

Halliday's interest is specifically in language as a resource for meaning-making. His general term for SFL's theoretical orientation is *language as social semiotic*. Because the theory is oriented to exploring how meanings are made (and not made) in social contexts, it is now being used for research in a variety of fields: educational linguistics (as noted above), psychiatry, many other aspects of health care, media studies, neuroscience, anthropology, sociology, and museology, to cite just some examples. Increasingly, researchers are using social semiotic principles to explore other modes of meaning-making, especially visual images.

Working from a perspective of educational practice, this course is oriented from a series of practical questions. It introduces key elements of the theoretical model, and of the grammatical descriptions at its centre. (Halliday has consistently argued that lexicogrammar is a crucial element in the meaning-making resources of language.) The course aims to help you to interpret SFL's specific theoretical claims against a background of 20th century work in semiotics, to critique these claims, and to be able to use some of the descriptive resources in practice.

The course also includes a brief introduction to visual analysis using systemic functional theory, particularly the work of Kress and van Leeuwen.

Course Text

Butt, D. et al. 2000. *Using functional grammar: An explorer's guide*. 2d.ed. North Ryde: NCETLR, Macquarie University. (Referred to as **UFG** in the course readings.)

Further References

- Halliday, M.A.K. and Matthiessen, C.M.I.M. 2004. *An introduction to functional grammar*. 3d.ed. London: Edward Arnold. (**Highly recommended** – Referred to as **IFG** in the course readings.)
- Halliday, M.A.K. and Hasan, R. 1985. *Language, context and text: Aspects of language in a social semiotic perspective*. Geelong: Deakin University Press. chs 1-3.
- Hasan, R. *Ways of saying, ways of meaning*. eds. C.Cloran, D.Butt and G.Williams. London: Cassell.
- Kress, G. and van Leeuwen, T. 2006. *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. 2d.ed. London: Routledge.
- Martin, J. and Rose, D. 2003. *Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause*. London: Continuum.
- Martin, J. and Rose, D. (2008). *Genre relations: Mapping culture*. London: Equinox.
- Mohan, B. 1986. *Language and content*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley
- Schleppegrell, M. 2004. *The language of schooling: A functional linguistics perspective*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Unsworth, L. ed. 2000. *Researching language in schools and communities: Functional linguistic perspectives*. London: Cassell.
- Williams, G. and Lukin, A. eds. 2004. *The development of language: Functional perspectives on species and individuals*. London: Continuum.

Resource website of the International Systemic Functional Linguistics Association:

<http://www.isfla.org/>

A particularly helpful bibliographic site, developed and maintained by Professor John Bateman:

<http://www.isfla.org/Systemics/Print/index.html>

Assessment

1. regular weekly short practice exercises. (The assessment task is to complete each exercise carefully: you will not be marked down for errors)
2. preparation of readings of each set article, and participation in discussion in each seminar
3. participation in joint analyses of text examples, posted on WebCT
4. a class review exercise. The date will be decided in the group early in the term.
5. selection of a very short text (perhaps chosen from your own research material), and initial preparation of it for more intensive study (e.g. into a ranking clause analysis). Draft plan due **June 5** (submitted by email).
6. analysis of *selected* features of the text you've chosen, and a 1500 word discussion written to be part of a research article. The focus for this work is intensive language analysis. Final paper due: **June 25**

Week 1
May 8

A. Introduction

- what is systemic functional linguistics?
- what is a 'system'; a 'function'?
- current interest in SFL across different languages and disciplines
- multimodality and SFL
- what are some of the *educational* questions SFL is being used to explore?

Language description

- what counts as a unit of grammar? different models for different purposes - why?
- spoken and written modes of language

Readings:

UFG. ch. 2

Ravelli, L. Getting started with functional analysis of texts. In *Researching language in schools and communities: Functional linguistic perspectives*. ed. L.Unsworth. London: Cassell.

Halliday, M.A.K. 1985. *Spoken and written language*. Geelong: Deakin University Press. ch 5.

Further Reading:

Halliday, M.A.K. 2007 [1979]. Differences between spoken and written language: Some implications for literacy teaching. *Language and education*. Volume 9 in the Collected Works of M.A.K.Halliday. ed. J.Webster. London: Continuum.

B. Social semiotic theory: relations between context, register and text

- de Saussure's semiotic concepts of the 'arbitrariness of the sign', langue/parole, and a different way of thinking about relations between language as a system and language as text
- SFL's model of *context*
- what are *texts*?
- what are *registers*?

Language Description

- nominal groups in English

Readings:

UFG. pp. 66-69

Culler, J. 1976. *Saussure*. London: Fontana. ch 2

Halliday, M.A.K. 1978. Language as social semiotic. In *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Edward Arnold. chapter 6

Further Reading:

IFG. pp. 311-329

Butt, D. 2004. How our meanings change: School contexts and semantic evolution. In *The development of language: Functional perspectives on species and individuals*. eds. G.Williams and A.Lukin. London: Continuum.

Week 2

May 15

A **Relations between ‘meaning’ and ‘grammar’**

- how does ‘meaning’ relate to ‘grammar’ in SFL theory
- why might this be important in education?
- the general concept of ‘realization’

Language Description

- clauses

Readings:

Course Notes

Martin, J.R. and Rose, D. 2003. op.cit. Section 1.3. Genre.

Further Reading:

IFG. ch. 3

Halliday, M.A.K. and Hasan, R. 1985. *Language, context and text: Aspects of language in a social semiotic perspective*. Geelong: Deakin University Press. chs 1-3.

B **Language Strata and ‘Metafunctions’**

- distinguishing different ‘strata’ or ‘levels’ of language
- different language resources for different purposes
- what is a ‘metafunction’?
- editing text from this perspective

Language Description

Review workshop

Readings:

UFG. ch 1

Further Reading:

Martin, J.R. 1993. Life as a noun: Arresting the universe in science and humanities. In Halliday, M.A.K. and Martin, J.R. *Writing science: Literacy and discursive power*. London: The Falmer Press.

Week 3

May 22

A Organizing Texts

Theme and Rheme, Given and New

Reading:

UFG. ch. 6

Kress, G. and van Leeuwen, T. 2006. The meaning of composition. *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. London: Routledge

B The ‘natural logic’ of texts

- rethinking ‘text’ in SFL
- clause complexes
- types of meaning relations between clauses in clause complexes
- editing text for logical relations

Language Description

- logico-semantic relations

Reading:

UFG. ch. 7

Halliday, M.A.K. 2004 [1995]. Language and the reshaping of human experience. *The language of science. Volume 5 in the Collected Works of M.A.K. Halliday*. ed. J.Webster. London: Continuum.

Further Reading:

IFG. ch. 7

Week 4

May 29

A Experiential Meanings and Structures

- the function of language in representing experience
- re-visiting relationships between meaning and structure
- critical use of these concepts in interpreting text
- learners learning functional grammar

Readings:

UFG. ch. 3

Whorf, B.L. 1956 [1939]. The relational of habitual thought and behaviour to language. *Language, thought and reality*. ed. J.B.Carroll. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press

Further Reading:

Halliday, M.A.K. 2002 [1990]. The construction of scientific knowledge and value in the grammar of scientific discourse: with reference to Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*. Linguistic Studies of Text and Discourse. Volume 2 in the Collected Works of M.A.K.Halliday. ed. J.Webster. London: Continuum.

Williams, G. 2004. Ontogenesis and grammatics: Functions of metalanguage in pedagogical discourse. In *The development of language: Functional perspectives on species and individuals*. eds. G.Williams and A.Lukin. London: Continuum.

Week 5

June 5 Interacting through language: 1

- the significance of register differences in interpersonal meanings
- exploring effects of changes in interpersonal meanings in texts
- 'subject positioning' and image analysis

Language Description

- mood, modality and speech function

Reading:

UFG. ch. 4

Kress, G. and van Leeuwen, T. 2006. Representation and interaction: designing the position of the viewer. *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. 2d.ed. London: Routledge.

Further Reading:

IFG. ch. 4

Week 6

June 12 Review Workshop and Class test