

Unit 03

An Introduction to Text Production (2)

within the SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL model of language

Slides for the session of
Written Expression Intermediate
held on
We 29.x.2025

Robert Spence
{ English | LangSciTech }
Saarland University

To the memory of my teacher:

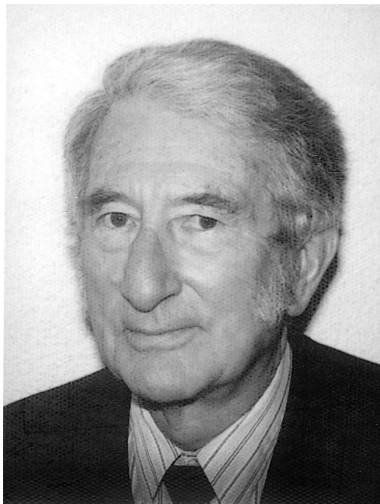


Image supplied by M.A.K. Halliday

M.A.K. Halliday (13.4.1925–15.4.2018)

- 1 Text and Textiles: the weaving metaphor
- 2 Context and Meaning
- 3 Some systemic-functional viewpoints
- 4 Strata
- 5 Metafunctions
- 6 Generic Structure (Potential): some examples
- 7 Classifying genres
- 8 Bibliography

The learning goals for today's session are:

- 1 To explore the “textile” metaphor for text(s)

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The learning goals for today's session are:

- ① To explore the “textile” metaphor for text(s)
- ② To explore the geological metaphor of ‘strata’ in language

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The learning goals for today's session are:

- ① To explore the “textile” metaphor for text(s)
- ② To explore the geological metaphor of ‘strata’ in language
- ③ To explore in more detail how the functions language serves in real life are reflected in the way language is organized as a system

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The learning goals for today's session are:

- ① To explore the “textile” metaphor for text(s)
- ② To explore the geological metaphor of ‘strata’ in language
- ③ To explore in more detail how the functions language serves in real life are reflected in the way language is organized as a system
- ④ To examine some simple examples of different ‘genres’

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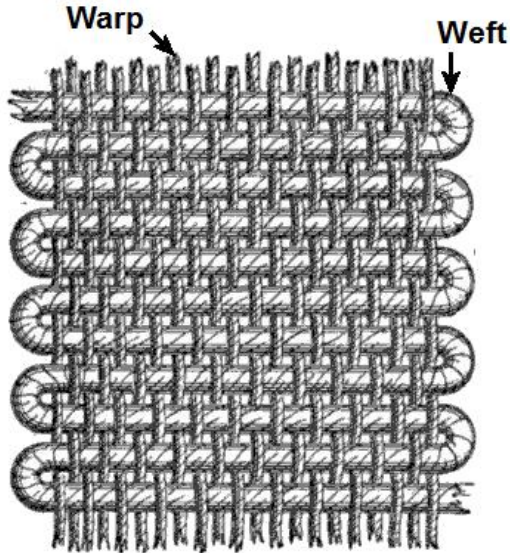
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- Text and Textiles: the weaving metaphor



Where did the notion of ‘context of situation’ come from?

- Text (or ‘a text’) (whether spontaneously spoken, or written) is a tissue of relevant meaning(s) – ein ‘Sinngewebe’.

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- But what if some of it is missing?

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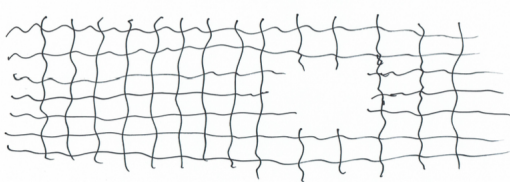
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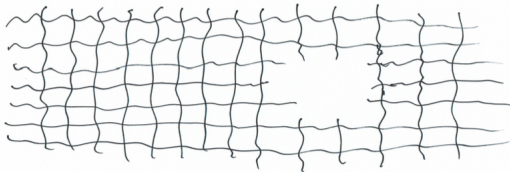
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- Text (or ‘a text’) (whether spontaneously spoken, or written) is a tissue of relevant meaning(s) – ein ‘Sinngewebe’.
- But what if some of it is missing?
- You can often work out what the missing bit is from the CONTEXT (the surrounding text)...



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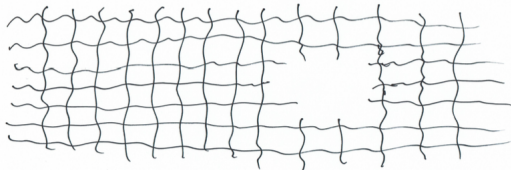
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- The anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) had written down the conversations of the Trobriand Islanders he was studying.

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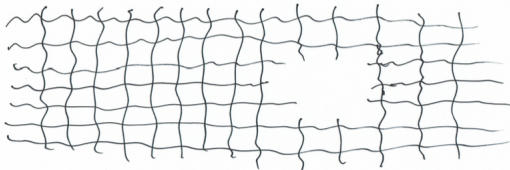
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-
- The anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) had written down the conversations of the Trobriand Islanders he was studying.
- But when he read them, he realized you had to know who was talking and what was going on (the CONTEXT OF SITUATION), otherwise you couldn't understand the ‘text’

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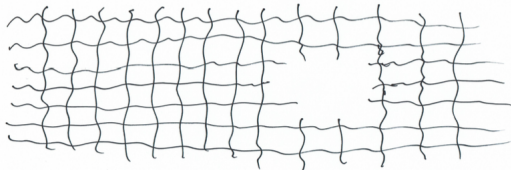
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- But what if some of it is missing?
- You can often work out what the missing bit is from the CONTEXT (the surrounding text)...



-
- The anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) had written down the conversations of the Trobriand Islanders he was studying.
- But when he read them, he realized you had to know who was talking and what was going on (the CONTEXT OF SITUATION), otherwise you couldn't understand the ‘text’
- If ‘CONTEXT’ is redefined in this way, we can use the term ‘CO-TEXT’ for the original sense of ‘the surrounding text’.

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Can you understand this text?

- See your handout: pp 300-301 of Malinowski's essay at the end of *The Meaning of Meaning*:
http://www.spence.saar.de/writtenexpression/unit03_20252/C__Additional_Handout/01_malinowski_text.pdf

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Can you understand this text?

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- Part of the problem can be solved if you know this:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GIl3nvclTE>

Can you understand this text?

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- Part of the problem can be solved if you know this:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GIl3nvclTE>
- That will help with the CONTEXT OF SITUATION of this text.

- Context and Meaning

Context is the matrix of meaning

Message:

“Take your clothes off”

Context:

Stranger shouting to
no one in particular at
the mall

Context:

Doctor to patient
getting a physical
exam

Context:

Lover in a bedroom

Context:

Mother about to give
her child a bath

[Source: <http://johnteleska.blogspot.de/2010/12/context-is-matrix-of-meaning.html>]

What about 'Context of Culture'?

- Later, Malinowski realized that you also needed to have more background information than just who was talking to whom while doing what, etc.

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What about 'Context of Culture'?

- Later, Malinowski realized that you also needed to have more background information than just who was talking to whom while doing what, etc.
- You needed to know the different types of occasions on which people recited particular kinds of texts about things that happened long ago.

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- Later, Malinowski realized that you also needed to have more background information than just who was talking to whom while doing what, etc.
- You needed to know the different types of occasions on which people recited particular kinds of texts about things that happened long ago.
- This involved a deeper background knowledge of the culture.

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- You needed to know the different types of occasions on which people recited particular kinds of texts about things that happened long ago.
- This involved a deeper background knowledge of the culture.
- In the culture of the Trobriand Islanders competitiveness and boasting play an important part.

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- You needed to know the different types of occasions on which people recited particular kinds of texts about things that happened long ago.
- This involved a deeper background knowledge of the culture.
- In the culture of the Trobriand Islanders competitiveness and boasting play an important part.
- You can find more information on CONTEXT OF SITUATION and CONTEXT OF CULTURE in *Language, Context, and Text*.

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(‘Pünktlichkeit’)

culture

language

(Partikel)

POTENTIAL

climate

(‘Verabredung’)

situation

text

(*noch! schon!*)

ACTUAL

weather

we

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(*noch! schon!*)

ACTUAL

weather

- Today’s weather is an actual instance of the climate.

(‘Pünktlichkeit’)

culture

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POTENTIAL

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situation

text

(*noch! schon!*)

ACTUAL

weather

- The climate is the potential for weather.
- Today’s weather is an actual instance of the climate.

- This text is an actual instance of the German language.

(‘Pünktlichkeit’)

culture

language

(Partikel)

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Culture, Situation, Language, Text (1)

we

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- The German language is the potential for German text(s).
- This text is an actual instance of the German language.

(‘Pünktlichkeit’)

(‘Verabredung’)

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(Partikel)

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POTENTIAL

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climate

weather

- The climate is the potential for weather.
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Culture, Situation, Language, Text (1)

- This situation is an actual instance of German culture.
- The German language is the potential for German text(s).
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(‘Pünktlichkeit’)

culture

language

(Partikel)

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climate

(‘Verabredung’)

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Culture, Situation, Language, Text (1)

- German culture is the potential for German situations.
- This situation is an actual instance of German culture.
- The German language is the potential for German text(s).
- This text is an actual instance of the German language.

(‘Pünktlichkeit’)

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(Partikel)

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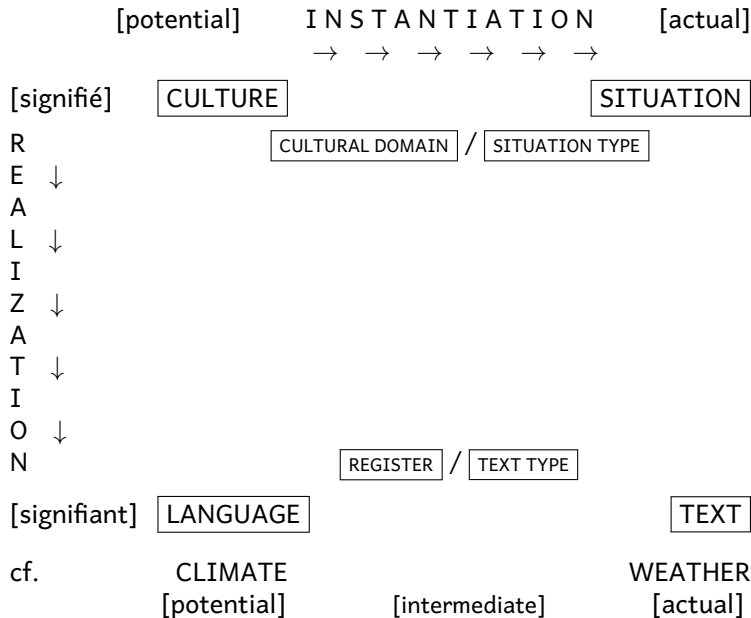
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Context, Situation, Text, Language (2)



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A 'text' is a semantic unit

- The 'text' is the central unit of semantics.
- The 'clause' is the central unit of grammar.
- The 'syllable' is the central unit of phonology.

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Rank scale of units

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SEMANTIC STRATUM

text



stage



phase



figure/message/move



participant

GRAMMATICAL STRATUM

clause



group/phrase



word



morpheme

PHONOLOGICAL STRATUM

tone group



foot



syllable



phoneme

Peculiarities (1): formal lexis, semanticky grammar

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TYPE OF LINGUISTICS:

	NON-FUNCTIONAL	FUNCTIONAL
<i>lexis is treated:</i>	semantically	formally
<i>grammar is treated:</i>	formally	semantically

Lexis as 'most delicate grammar' ('feinste Grammatikstufe')
alternatively:
treat grammar as 'least delicate lexis' ('gröbste Stufe der
Lexik')

Peculiarities (2): grammar as ‘context-neutral meaning’

NON-FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS	FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS
pragmatics	semantics
semantics	lexico-
syntax & morphology	grammar
phonology	phonology
phonetics	phonetics

syntax = grammar ‘above the word’; morphology = grammar ‘below the word’;

lexis = dictionary; grammar = grammar book;

if you only have your dictionary and your grammar book, you have a description of the ‘context-neutral’ meaning — but how much of the ‘actual’ meaning can you understand in real life?

“Just a trim, is it?”

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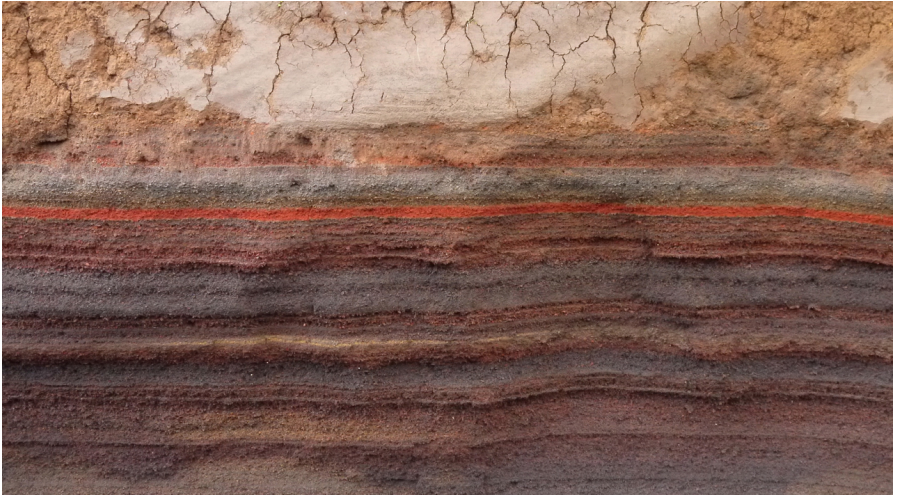
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- Strata



[Source: <https://www.justinsilver.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Volcanic-Strata.jpg>]

Language in its social context (3), repeated

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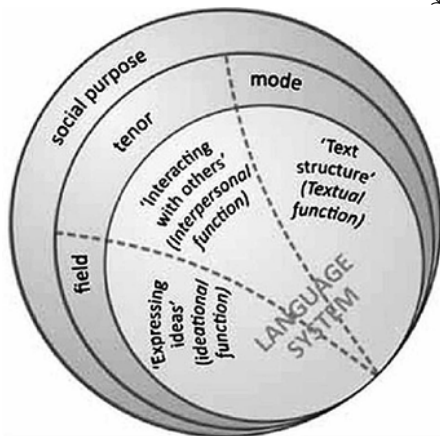
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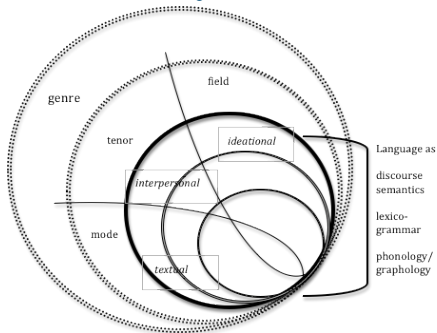
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STRATA (top left to bottom right)



(META)FUNCTIONS (bottom left to top right)

‘Metaredundancy’



Source:

<https://reclaimingthelanguage.wordpress.com/2016/11/26/sfl-a-living-theory-of-the-living-language/>

(after Sue Hood)

... the system of phonology realises that of lexicogrammar; the system of lexicogrammar realised in phonology realises that of semantics; the system of semantics realised in lexicogrammar realised in phonology —which we call “language” —realises the system of context (i.e. the “culture”, considered as a semiotic potential).

Halliday & Matthiessen (1999: 605-6)

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- **Phonetics** (are those human sounds? AND: are those the kinds of sounds you'd hear in English?)

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- **Phonology** (are those the kinds of sound patterns you find in English words and sentences?)
- **Phonetics** (are those human sounds? AND: are those the kinds of sounds you'd hear in English?)

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- **Lexicogrammar** (what do the words and sentences mean... regardless of context?)
- **Phonology** (are those the kinds of sound patterns you find in English words and sentences?)
- **Phonetics** (are those human sounds? AND: are those the kinds of sounds you'd hear in English?)

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- **Discourse Semantics** (what do the words and structures mean... in context?)
- **Lexicogrammar** (what do the words and sentences mean... regardless of context?)
- **Phonology** (are those the kinds of sound patterns you find in English words and sentences?)
- **Phonetics** (are those human sounds? AND: are those the kinds of sounds you'd hear in English?)

Higher strata 'constraining' lower strata

- **Register** (what's going on? who's taking part? what role is language playing?)
- **Discourse Semantics** (what do the words and structures mean... in context?)
- **Lexicogrammar** (what do the words and sentences mean... regardless of context?)
- **Phonology** (are those the kinds of sound patterns you find in English words and sentences?)
- **Phonetics** (are those human sounds? AND: are those the kinds of sounds you'd hear in English?)

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- **Genre** (what kind of text for what social purpose?)
- **Register** (what's going on? who's taking part? what role is language playing?)
- **Discourse Semantics** (what do the words and structures mean... in context?)
- **Lexicogrammar** (what do the words and sentences mean... regardless of context?)
- **Phonology** (are those the kinds of sound patterns you find in English words and sentences?)
- **Phonetics** (are those human sounds? AND: are those the kinds of sounds you'd hear in English?)

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- **(Code)** (who's an insider? e.g. two insiders: „*Unn?*“ — „*Jo.*“)
- **Genre** (what kind of text for what social purpose?)
- **Register** (what's going on? who's taking part? what role is language playing?)
- **Discourse Semantics** (what do the words and structures mean... in context?)
- **Lexicogrammar** (what do the words and sentences mean... regardless of context?)
- **Phonology** (are those the kinds of sound patterns you find in English words and sentences?)
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- **Ideology** (what is thinkable? what is doable?)
- **(Code)** (who's an insider? e.g. two insiders: „*Unn?*“ — „*Jo.*“)
- **Genre** (what kind of text for what social purpose?)
- **Register** (what's going on? who's taking part? what role is language playing?)
- **Discourse Semantics** (what do the words and structures mean... in context?)
- **Lexicogrammar** (what do the words and sentences mean... regardless of context?)
- **Phonology** (are those the kinds of sound patterns you find in English words and sentences?)
- **Phonetics** (are those human sounds? AND: are those the kinds of sounds you'd hear in English?)

Higher strata 'constraining' lower strata

- (Material reality: Bipedal apes living)
- **Ideology** (what is thinkable? what is doable?)
- **(Code)** (who's an insider? e.g. two insiders: „*Unn?*“ — „*Jo.*“)
- **Genre** (what kind of text for what social purpose?)
- **Register** (what's going on? who's taking part? what role is language playing?)
- **Discourse Semantics** (what do the words and structures mean... in context?)
- **Lexicogrammar** (what do the words and sentences mean... regardless of context?)
- **Phonology** (are those the kinds of sound patterns you find in English words and sentences?)
- **Phonetics** (are those human sounds? AND: are those the kinds of sounds you'd hear in English?)

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Higher strata 'constraining' lower strata

- (Material reality: Bipedal apes living)
- **Ideology** (what is thinkable? what is doable?)
- **(Code)** (who's an insider? e.g. two insiders: „*Unn?*“ — „*Jo.*“)
- **Genre** (what kind of text for what social purpose?)
- **Register** (what's going on? who's taking part? what role is language playing?)
- **Discourse Semantics** (what do the words and structures mean... in context?)
- **Lexicogrammar** (what do the words and sentences mean... regardless of context?)
- **Phonology** (are those the kinds of sound patterns you find in English words and sentences?)
- **Phonetics** (are those human sounds? AND: are those the kinds of sounds you'd hear in English?)
- (Material reality: Bipedal apes making noises with their faces)

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- “*Language: the noises we make with our faces in order to live*”
- (Material reality: Bipedal apes living)
- **Ideology** (what is thinkable? what is doable?)
- **(Code)** (who’s an insider? e.g. two insiders: „*Unn?*“ — „*Jo.*“)
- **Genre** (what kind of text for what social purpose?)
- **Register** (what’s going on? who’s taking part? what role is language playing?)
- **Discourse Semantics** (what do the words and structures mean... in context?)
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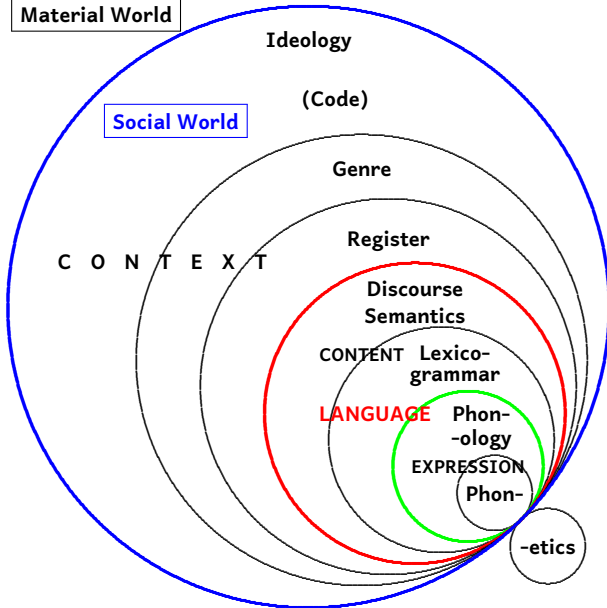
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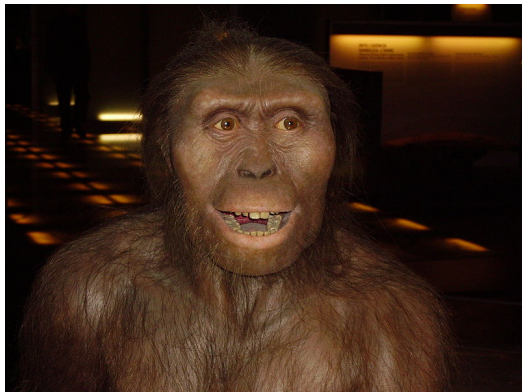
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Ideology is historically conditioned



Source: Wikipedia / Licence: CC by SA 2.0

It's 3.2 million years ago. You're an *Australopithecus afarensis*. What is thinkable? What is doable?

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Adopting the 'inter-organism' perspective:

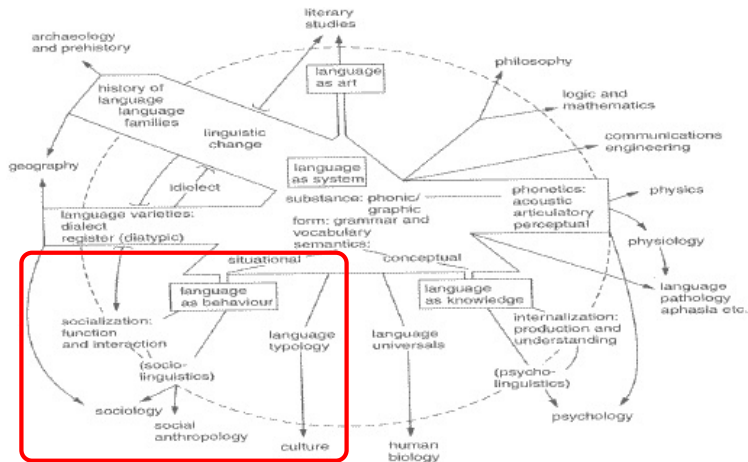


Figure 1: The domains of language study and their relation to other fields (Halliday, 1978).

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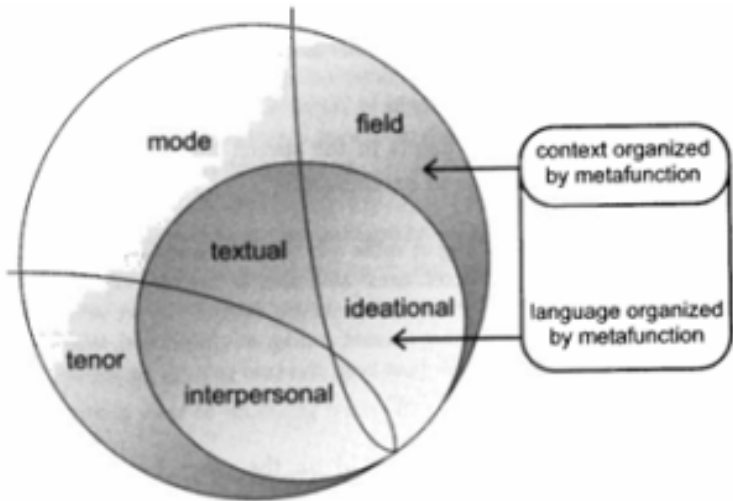
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[Martin & Rose (2007: 297)]

Functional components of language and the type of structure associated with each (1)

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Function of language		Examples	Structural type
ideational	logical	—Chris said ... that Jane thought ... that Tom had claimed ... that Peter likes Mozart	linear ("string"-like)
	experiential	—the dinosaurs died —an asteroid killed the dinosaurs —Peter likes Mozart —Sally's the cleverest girl in the class	nuclear ("particle"-like)
interpersonal		—he likes Mozart —he's, like, sooo totally into Mozart —I suspect he's possibly rather fond of Mozart, wouldn't you say?	prosodic ("field"-like)
textual		—an asteroid killed the dinosaurs —they were killed by an asteroid —they were killed by one —it was an asteroid that killed them	culminative ("wave"-like)

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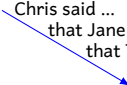
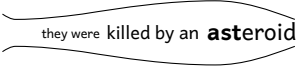
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Functional components of language and the type of structure associated with each (2)

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Function of language		Examples	Structural type
→ (natural logic) reflecting upon the world	modification, quotes/reports, subordination, coordination, apposition, ...	Chris said ... that Jane thought ... that Tom had claimed ... that Peter likes Mozart 	linear ("string"-like)
	processes, participants, circumstances ...		nuclear ("particle"-like)
acting upon the world by interacting with the other people in it: mood, modality, negation, attitude, ...		???????????????????? ???????????????????? suspect...possibly...rather...wouldn't ???????????????????? ????????????????????	prosodic ("field"-like)
creating relevance: theme-rheme structure, information structure, ...			culminative ("wave"-like)

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Approaching the notion of genre: J. R. Martin (1993): *English Text*

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SEQUENCES (Barthes 1966/1977):

‘telephone call’:

telephone ringing ^ picking up the receiver ^ speaking ^ putting down the receiver (1966/1977:101)

“having a drink”:

order a drink ^ obtain it ^ drink it ^ pay for it (1966/1977:101)

“offering a cigarette”:

offering ^ accepting ^ smoking ^ lighting (1966/1977:102)

TEXT STRUCTURES (Hasan 1977, 1984b, 1985a/9):

“medical appointment making”:

Identification ^ Application ^ Offer ^ Confirmation (1977:233)

“service encounter”:

Sale request ^ Sale compliance ^ Sale ^ Purchase ^ Purchase closure (1985a/1989:60)

“nursery tale”:

Initiating event ^ Sequent Eventⁿ ^ Final Eventⁿ (1984b:80)

A very simple example of a genre – a service encounter (Hasan 1985)

1. →	Who's next? (1)	
2. →	I think I am. (2)	→ SI
	I'll have ten oranges and a kilo of bananas please. (3)	→ SR
3. →	Yes, anything else? (4)	
4. →	Yes.	→ SC
	I wanted some strawberries (5) but these don't look very ripe. (6)	
5. →	O they're ripe all right. (7) They're just that colour kind a' greeny pink. (8)	→ SE
6. →	Mm I see. (9)	
	Will they be OK for this evening. (10)	
7. →	O yeah, they'll be fine; (11) I had some yesterday (12) and they're good very sweet and fresh. (13)	→ SE
8. →	O all right then, I'll take two. (14)	→ SR
9. →	You'll like them (15) cos they're good. (16)	→ SE
	Will that be all? (17)	
10. →	Yeah, thank you. (18)	→ SC
11. →	That'll be two dollars sixtynine please. (19)	→ S
12. →	I can give you nine cents. (20)	→ P
13. →	Yeah OK thanks (21) eighty, three dollars (22) and two is five. (23) Thank you. (24)	→ PC
	Have a nice day. (25)	
14. →	See ya'. (26)	→ F

The key to symbols

SI = sale initiation
 SC = sale compliance
 S = sale
 PC = purchase closure

SR = sale request
 SE = sale enquiry
 P = purchase
 F = finis

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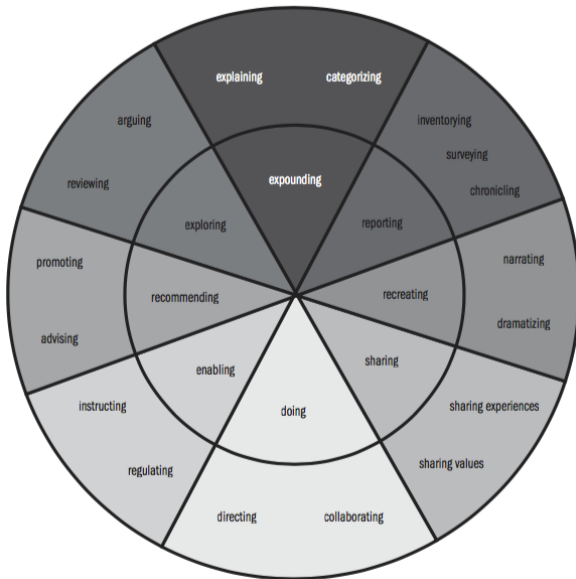
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One possible way of classifying genres by FIELD (IFG4)



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[<http://www.listchallenges.com/all-the-books-one-remembers-reading-by-sonita>]

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