

Unit 04

An Introduction to Text Production (3)

within the SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL model of language

Print version of the
Written Expression Intermediate
presentation given on
We 05.xi.2025

Robert Spence, { English | LangSciTech }, Saarland University

To the memory of my teacher:

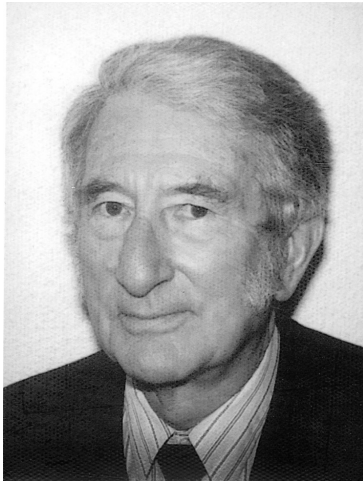
04.1

Image supplied by M.A.K. Halliday

M.A.K. Halliday (13.4.1925–15.4.2018)

04.2

Goals

The learning goals for today's session are:

1. To explore the “organ registration” metaphor of REGISTER
2. To look at TENOR and MODE in slightly more detail, using system networks of features
3. To introduce the “function-rank matrix” (see extra handout) and give examples of some of the grammatical systems listed in it
4. To have a closer look at some of the linguistic resources involved in text production
5. To apply everything discussed so far (on genre, register, and grammar) to some real texts (see handout “Some texts to think about”)

04.3

1 Adjusting the register (Orgel: “Registrierung”) from one stage to the next

Adjusting the register (Orgel: “Registrierung”) from one stage to the next (1)

Sometimes you need to adjust the register when moving from one stage of the work to the next, i.e. you need to activate different subsets of your total set of semiotic resources:



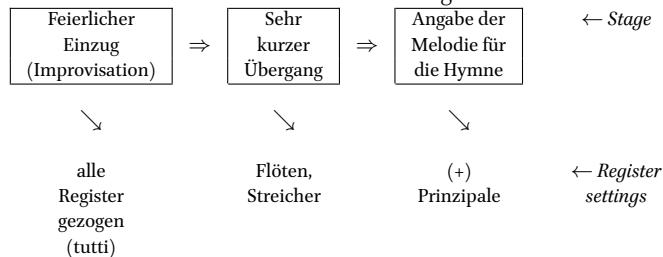
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzC1xA6ob9g&t=2m55s>

Basilika Walldürn - Feierlicher Einzug (Pontifikalamt am 05.06.2015) – GGB WÜ 860 (*Lasst, Christen, hoch den Jubel schallen*)

04.4

Adjusting the register (Orgel: “Registrierung”) from one stage to the next (2)

- This musical text belongs to a recognizable GENRE.
- Its Generic Structure Potential is something like:

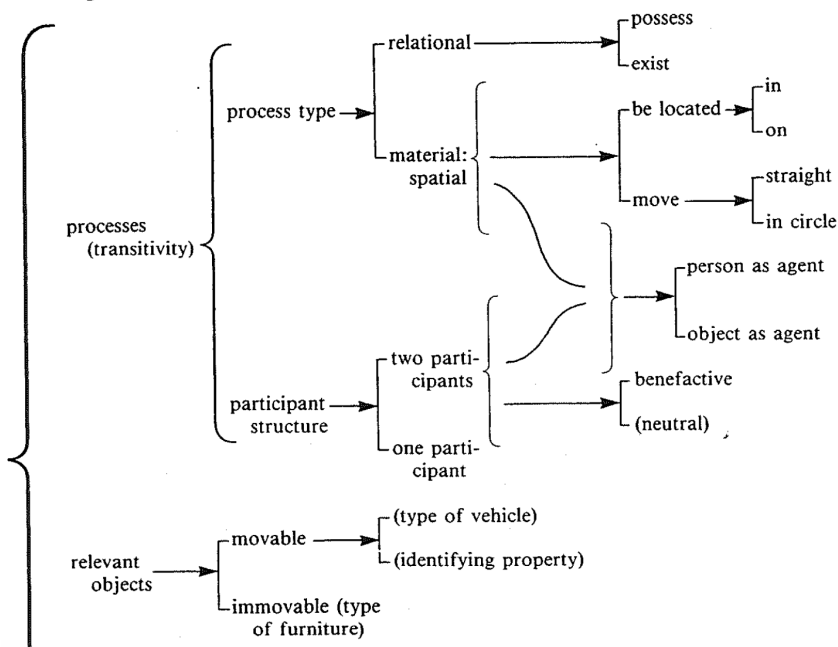


- The congregation is aware of this typical structure and can interpret what it means.

04.5

Adjusting the register (Orgel: “Registrierung”) from one stage to the next (3) – LCT ch 3 – no mental processes if playing with trains

Figure 3.1 Experiential systems in Text 3.1



04.6

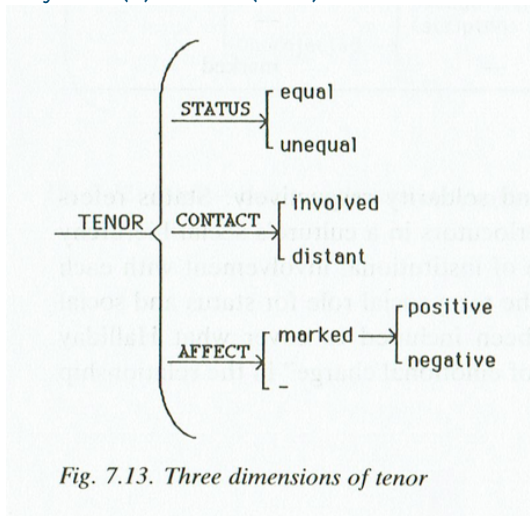
Adjusting the register (Orgel: “Registrierung”) from one stage to the next (4)

- Look at the clauses in Text C in your handout “Some texts to think about”. <http://www.spence-saar.de/courses/writtenexpression/texts/index.pdf>
- What do you notice about the differences between the first and second paragraphs in terms of:
 1. the tense of the verbs
 2. the type of process represented (‘doing/happening’ or ‘being’)
 3. the voice (active or passive)
- If you have time, examine also:
 1. whether the clause contains a participant that actually ‘suffers’ the process represented by the verb
 2. whether the ‘agent’ of the process is explicitly mentioned in a passive clause
- For the COVID-19 semesters, this task was redesigned as an exercise sheet rather than as a class discussion: http://www.spence-saar.de/courses/writtenexpression/text_C_tense_voice/text_C_tense_voice.pdf

04.7

2 Tenor in more detail

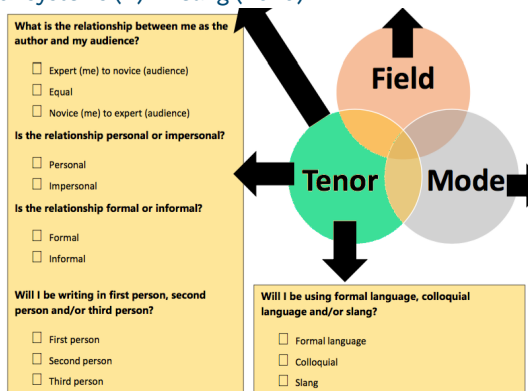
Tenor systems (1) – Martin (1992)



One example among dozens: distant contact → no mood ellipsis;
Going to the party tonight? → *Are you going to the party tonight?*

04.8

Tenor systems (2) – Leung (2016)



04.9

3 Mode in more detail

Mode systems (1) — Martin (1992)

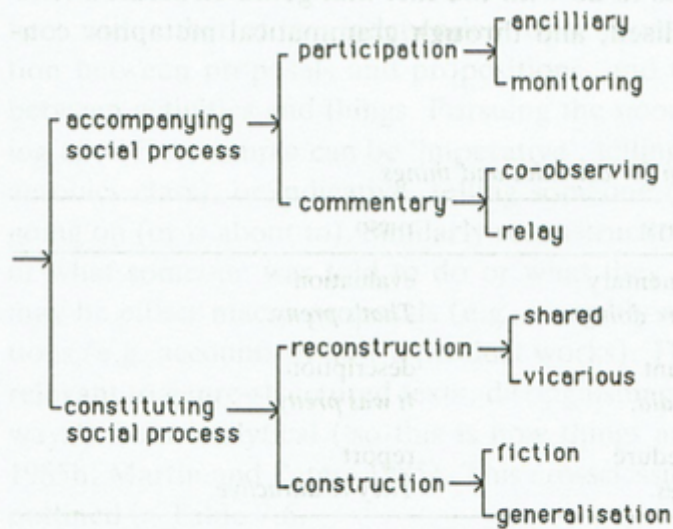


Fig. 7.10. Mode — degrees of abstraction

04.10

Mode systems (2) — Martin (1992)

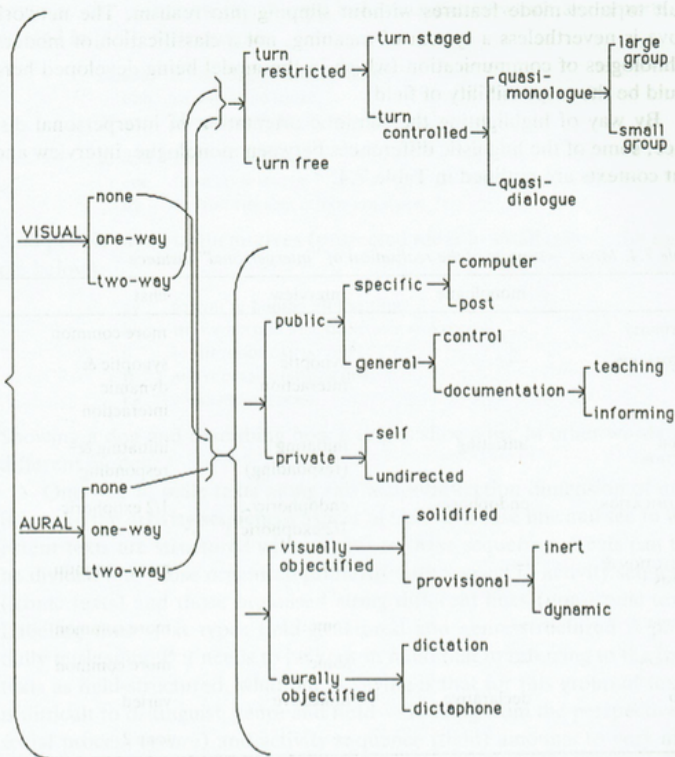
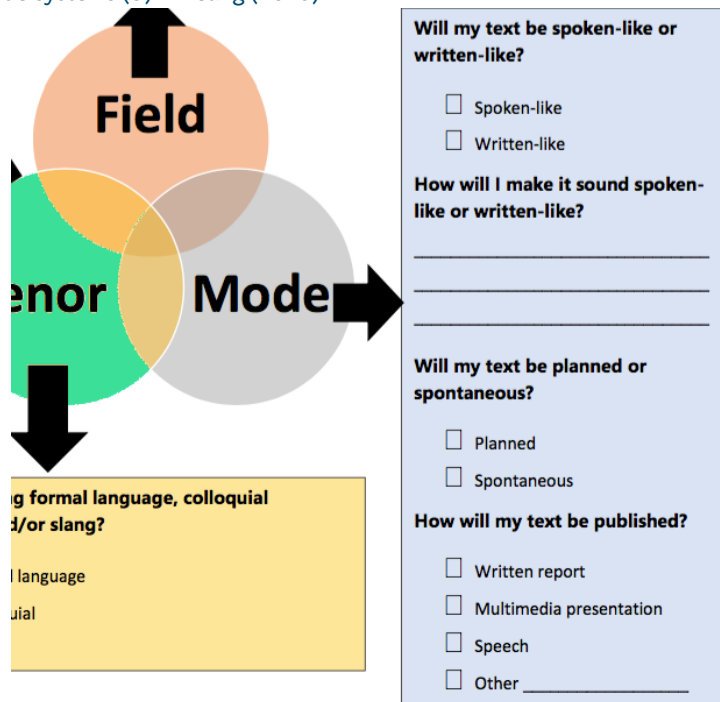


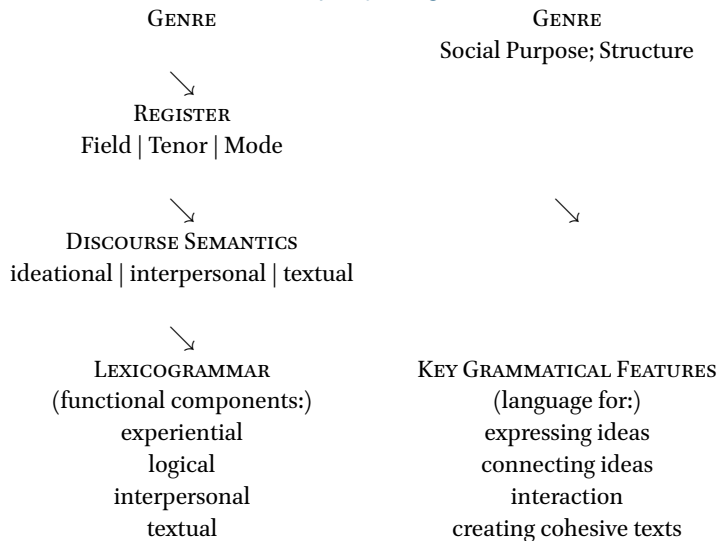
Fig. 7.9. Mode systems: speaking and writing focus

04.11



4 A didactic simplification

Martin & Rose (2007²) vs. Humphrey, Droga & Feez (2012²).



5 ‘Functional components’ a.k.a. ‘metafunctions’ in discourse semantics

‘Functional components’ a.k.a. ‘metafunctions’ in discourse semantics

- IDEATIONAL
 - IDEATION — construing* experience
 - CONJUNCTION — logical connections
- INTERPERSONAL
 - APPRAISAL — negotiating attitudes
 - NEGOTIATION — interacting in dialogue
- TEXTUAL
 - IDENTIFICATION — tracking participants
 - PERIODICITY — information flow

*construing = ‘making sense of by projecting a structure onto’
e.g. *siqua recordanti benefacta priora voluptas est homini*

For details, see: J.R. MARTIN and David ROSE: *Working with Discourse — Meaning Beyond the Clause*. London: Continuum, 2007².

04.14

6 ‘Functional components’ a.k.a. ‘metafunctions’ in grammar (1): The function-rank matrix

‘Functional components’ a.k.a. ‘metafunctions’ in grammar (1): The function-rank matrix

Functional components of the semantic system					
Ideational		Interpersonal	Textual		
Experiential	Logical		(structural)		(non-structural)
By rank:	All ranks:	By rank:	By rank:	Cross-rank:	
Clause: transitivity	Paratactic and hypotactic relations (condition, addition, report)	Clause: mood, modality	Clause: theme	Information unit: information distribution, information focus	Cohesion Reference Substitution Ellipsis Conjunction Lexical cohesion
Verbal group: tense		Verbal group: person	Verbal group: voice		
Nominal group: epithesis		Nominal group: attitude	Nominal group: deixis		
Adverbial group: circumstance		Adverbial group: comment	Adverbial group: conjunction		

Fortunately, he subsequently sang quite normally.
comment conjunctive circumstantial
(interpersonal) (textual) (experiential)
Adjunct Adjunct Adjunct

04.15

7 ‘Functional components’ a.k.a. ‘metafunctions’ in grammar (2)

‘Functional components’ a.k.a. ‘metafunctions’ in grammar (2)

1. Clause as interaction: grammatical systems of MOOD — enacting social relationships: INTERPERSONAL
2. Clause as representation: grammatical systems of TRANSITIVITY — construing a model of reality: IDEATIONAL; EXPERIENTIAL
3. Clause as message: grammatical systems of THEME — creating relevance to context: TEXTUAL
4. These three sets of choices are simultaneous to and independent of each other (i.e. they are ‘in parallel’)

04.16

Metafunctions in the grammar of English (3): syntagmatic view

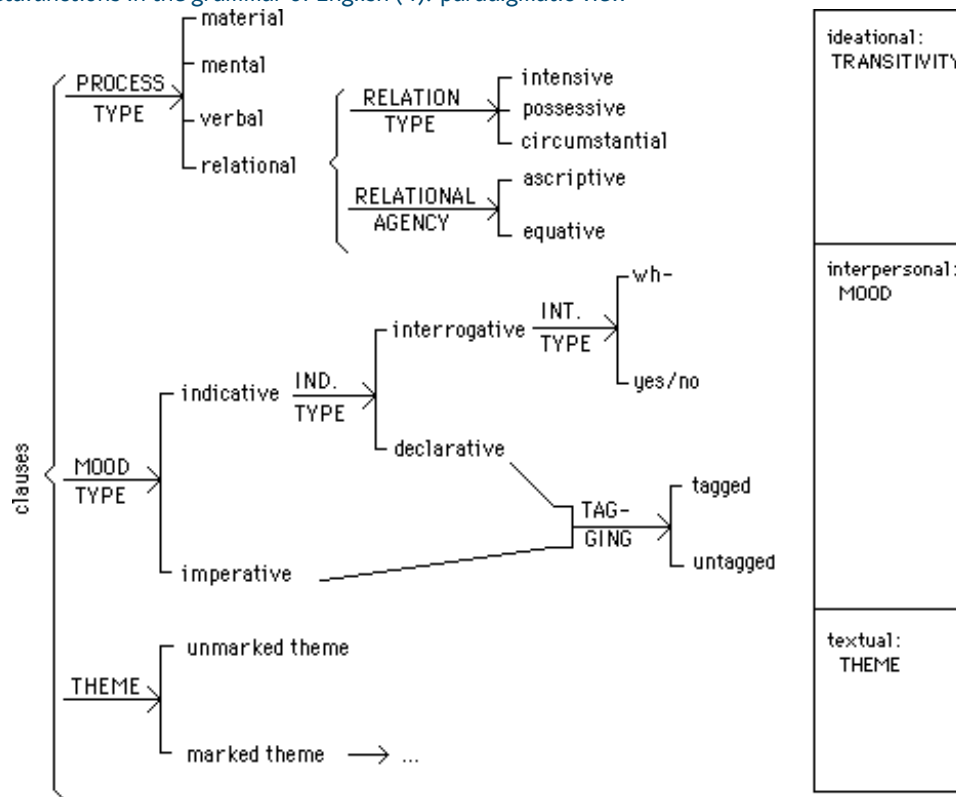
Do	cats	eat	bats?	
Mood		Residue		MOOD
Finite	Subject	Predicator	Complement _{D.O.}	
Pro-	Actor/ Agent	-cess: material	Goal/ Medium 'affected'	TRANSITIVITY
Theme		Rheme		THEME

Who	shot	the sheriff?	
Mood		Residue	
Subject/Wh-	(did) Finite	Predicator (shoot)	Complement _{D.O.}
Actor/ Agent	Process: material	Goal/ Medium	
Theme	Rheme		

I	have	a dream.	
Mood		Residue	
Subject	(do) Finite	Predicator (have)	Complement _{D.O.}
Carrier/ Medium	Process: relational: ascriptive/possessive	Attribute/ Range	
Theme	Rheme		

04.17

Metafunctions in the grammar of English (4): paradigmatic view



04.18

8 Situating grammar

Situating English grammar—the grammar of a nice cup of tea

(...)

Lastly, tea—unless one is drinking it in the Russian style—should be drunk *without sugar*. I know very well that I am in a minority here. But still, how can you call yourself a true tea-lover if you destroy the flavour of your tea by putting sugar in it? It would be equally reasonable to put in pepper or salt. Tea is meant to be bitter, just as beer is meant to be bitter. If you sweeten it, you are no longer tasting the tea, you are merely tasting the sugar; you could make a very similar drink by dissolving sugar in plain hot water.

Some people would answer that they don't like tea in itself, that they only drink it in order to be warmed and stimulated, and they need sugar to take the taste away. To those misguided people I would say: Try drinking tea without sugar for, say, a fortnight and it is very unlikely that you will ever want to ruin your tea by sweetening it again.

(...)

—George Orwell, 'A Nice Cup of Tea' (1946).

04.19

Textual component — THEME

Lastly, tea—unless one is drinking it in the Russian style—should be drunk *without sugar*. I know very well that I am in a minority here. But still, how can you call yourself a true tea-lover if you destroy the flavour of your tea by putting sugar in it? It would be equally reasonable to put in pepper or salt. Tea is meant to be bitter, just as beer is meant to be bitter. If you sweeten it, you are no longer tasting the tea, you are merely tasting the sugar; you could make a very similar drink by dissolving sugar in plain hot water.

Some people would answer that they don't like tea in itself, that they only drink it in order to be warmed and stimulated, and they need sugar to take the taste away. To those misguided people I would say: Try drinking tea without sugar for, say, a fortnight and it is very unlikely that you will ever want to ruin your tea by sweetening it again.

unmarked Theme (Theme = Subject)

marked Theme (Theme ≠ Subject)

04.20

Interpersonal component — MOOD

Lastly, tea—unless one is drinking it in the Russian style—should be drunk *without sugar*. I know very well that I am in a minority here. But still, how can you call yourself a true tea-lover if you destroy the flavour of your tea by putting sugar in it? It would be equally reasonable to put in pepper or salt. Tea is meant to be bitter, just as beer is meant to be bitter. If you sweeten it, you are no longer tasting the tea, you are merely tasting the sugar; you could make a very similar drink by dissolving sugar in plain hot water. Some people would answer that they don't like tea in itself, that they only drink it in order to be warmed and stimulated, and they need sugar to take the taste away. To those misguided people I would say: Try drinking tea without sugar for, say, a fortnight and it is very unlikely that you will ever want to ruin your tea by sweetening it again.

indicative: declarative MOOD

indicative: interrogative MOOD

imperative MOOD

04.21

Interpersonal component — POLARITY

Lastly, tea—unless one is drinking it in the Russian style—should be drunk *without sugar*. I know very well that I am in a minority here. But still, how can you call yourself a true tea-lover if you destroy the flavour of your tea by putting sugar in it? It would be equally reasonable to put in pepper or salt. Tea is meant to be bitter, just as beer is meant to be bitter. If you sweeten it, you **are no longer tasting** the tea, you are merely tasting the sugar; you could make a very similar drink by dissolving sugar in plain hot water.

Some people would answer that they **don't like** tea in itself, that they only drink it in order to be warmed and stimulated, and they **need** sugar to take the taste away. To those misguided people I would say: Try drinking tea without sugar for, say, a fortnight and it is very **unlikely** that you will ever want to ruin your tea by sweetening it again.

positive POLARITY

negative POLARITY

04.22

Interpersonal component — MOOD TAGGING

Lastly, tea—unless one is drinking it in the Russian style—should be drunk *without sugar*, **shouldn't it?** I know very well that I am in a minority here, **aren't I**. But still, how can you call yourself a true tea-lover if you destroy the flavour of your tea by putting sugar in it? It would be equally reasonable to put in pepper or salt. Tea is meant to be bitter, just as beer is meant to be bitter. If you sweeten it, you are no longer tasting the tea, **are you**, you are merely tasting the sugar, **aren't you**; you could make a very similar drink by dissolving sugar in plain hot water.

Some people would answer that they don't like tea in itself, that they only drink it in order to be warmed and stimulated, and they need sugar to take the taste away. To those misguided people I would say: Try drinking tea without sugar for, say, a fortnight, **will you?**, and it is very unlikely that you will ever want to ruin your tea by sweetening it again, **will you.**

04.23

Interpersonal component — MODALITY

Lastly, tea—unless one is drinking it in the Russian style—**should** be drunk *without sugar*. I know very well that I am in a minority here. But still, how **can** you call yourself a true tea-lover if you destroy the flavour of your tea by putting sugar in it? It would be equally reasonable to put in pepper or salt. Tea is meant to be bitter, just as beer is meant to be bitter. If you sweeten it, you are no longer tasting the tea, you are merely tasting the sugar; you **could** make a very similar drink by dissolving sugar in plain hot water.

Some people would answer that they don't like tea in itself, that they only drink it in order to be warmed and stimulated, and they need sugar to take the taste away. To those misguided people I would say: Try drinking tea without sugar for, say, a fortnight and it is very **unlikely** that you will ever want to ruin your tea by sweetening it again.

04.24

Experiential component — PROCESS TYPE

Lastly, tea—unless one **IS DRINKING** it in the Russian style—should be drunk *without sugar*. I **KNOW** very well that I **AM** in a minority here. But still, how can you call yourself a true tea-lover if you destroy the flavour of your tea by putting sugar in it? It would be equally reasonable to put in pepper or salt. Tea is meant to be bitter, just as beer is meant to be bitter. If you sweeten it, you are no longer tasting the tea, you are merely tasting the sugar; you could make a very similar drink by dissolving sugar in plain hot water.

Some people would answer that they don't like tea in itself, that they only drink it in order to be warmed and stimulated, and they need sugar to take the taste away. To those misguided people I would say: Try drinking tea without sugar for, say, a fortnight and it is very unlikely that you will ever want to ruin your tea by sweetening it again.

material PROCESS

mental PROCESS

relational PROCESS

04.25

Experiential component — nominal group

Lastly, tea—unless one is drinking it in **the Russian style**—should be drunk *without sugar*. I know very well that I am in a minority here. But still, how can you call yourself **a true tea-lover** if you destroy the flavour of your tea by putting sugar in it? It would be equally reasonable to put in pepper or salt. Tea is meant to be bitter, just as beer is meant to be bitter. If you sweeten it, you are no longer tasting the tea, you are merely tasting the sugar; you could make **a very similar drink** by dissolving sugar in **plain hot water**.

Some people would answer that they don't like tea in itself, that they only drink it in order to be warmed and stimulated, and they need sugar to take the taste away. To **those misguided people** I would say: Try drinking **tea** without sugar for, say, a fortnight and it is very unlikely that you will ever want to ruin your tea by sweetening **it** again.

nominal group

04.26

Experiential component — TENSE

Lastly, tea—unless one **is drinking** it in the Russian style—should be drunk *without sugar*. I **know** very well that I am in a minority here. But still, how can you call yourself a true tea-lover if you destroy the flavour of your tea by putting sugar in it? It would be equally reasonable to put in pepper or salt. Tea is meant to be bitter, just as beer is meant to be bitter. If you sweeten it, you are no longer tasting the tea, you are merely tasting the sugar; you could make a very similar drink by dissolving sugar in plain hot water. Some people would answer that they don't like tea in itself, that they only drink it in order to be warmed and stimulated, and they need sugar to take the taste away. To those misguided people I would say: Try drinking tea without sugar for, say, a fortnight and it is very unlikely that you **will ever want** to ruin your tea by sweetening it again.

present

present-in-present

future (?)

04.27

Logical component — clause complexes

Lastly, tea—unless one is drinking it in the Russian style—should be drunk *without sugar*. I know very well that I am in a minority here. But still, how can you call yourself a true tea-lover if you destroy the flavour of your tea by putting sugar in it? It would be equally reasonable to put in pepper or salt. Tea is meant to be bitter, just as beer is meant to be bitter. If you sweeten it, you are no longer tasting the tea, you are merely tasting the sugar; you could make a very similar drink by dissolving sugar in plain hot water.

Some people would answer that they don't like tea in itself, that they only drink it in order to be warmed and stimulated, and they need sugar to take the taste away. To those misguided people I would say: Try drinking tea without sugar for, say, a fortnight and it is very unlikely that you will ever want to ruin your tea by sweetening it again.

expanding clause: condition

projected clause: idea

04.29

Logical component — verbal group complexes

Lastly, tea—unless one is drinking it in the Russian style—should be drunk *without sugar*. I know very well that I am in a minority here. But still, how can you call yourself a true tea-lover if you destroy the flavour of your tea by putting sugar in it? It would be equally reasonable to put in pepper or salt. Tea is meant to be bitter, just as beer is meant to be bitter. If you sweeten it, you are no longer tasting the tea, you are merely tasting the sugar; you could make a very similar drink by dissolving sugar in plain hot water.

Some people would answer that they don't like tea in itself, that they only drink it in order to be warmed and stimulated, and they need sugar to take the taste away. To those misguided people I would say:

Try | drinking tea without sugar for, say, a fortnight and it is very unlikely that you will ever want | to ruin your tea by sweetening it again.

expansion: means

projection: idea

04.29

9 Checklist of points to add

Add or expand on these points in future iterations

- Astrology as a semiotic system.
- Saussure's speech chain diagram (biology/physics/biology) and concentric vs cotangential circles (language makes contact with matter through sound); focusing on the correct stratum – cf focusing a microscope.
- Kutschera quote: Nichts in den Geisteswissenschaften ergibt einen Sinn, außer im Lichte der Biologie (*und der Soziologie!*).
- ex contradictione sequitur quodlibet
 1. Dies ist ein Kopftuch (= *prémisse/signifiant*),
 2. dies ist kein Kopftuch (= *contradiction/signé*);
 3. dies ist der Islam (= *conclusion/signifié*) ... oder sonst was (= *l'arbitraire du signe*)
- Saussure's sign function expanded to include the notion of context: "something that stands for something, to someone, in some respect, in some context or other..."
 - 'dies ist meine kulturelle Identität' (Kontext?), vs
 - 'das ist die Unterdrückung von Frauen durch das abrahamitische Patriarchat' (Kontext?)

04.30

10 Bibliography

04.31

Bibliography

BERNSTEIN, Basil (2000). 'Vertical and Horizontal Discourse: An Essay'. In: Basil BERNSTEIN, *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control, and Identity*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, (revised edition).

HALLIDAY, M. A. K. & HASAN, Ruqaiya (1985). *Language, Context, and Text. Aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective*. Geelong: Deakin Univ. Press.

HALLIDAY, M. A. K. (1994²) *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London, Longman.

HALLIDAY, M. A. K. & MARTIN, J. R. (1993). *Writing Science: Literacy and Discursive Power*. Bristol/London: The Falmer Press.

HALLIDAY, M. A. K. & MATTHIESSEN, Christian M. I. M. (1999). *Construing Experience through Meaning*. London: Cassell (Open linguistics series, edited by Robin Fawcett).

HUMPHREY, Sally, DROGA, Louise & FEEZ, Susan (2012). *LANGUAGE AND MEANING*. Primary English Teaching Association Australia. (second edition). http://www.petaa.edu.au/iMIS_Test/PETAA_Docs/Publications/Sample_Papers/PET098E.pdf

LEUNG, Alice (2016). 'Field, tenor and mode — a literacy framework for all subjects'. (Internet blog article, 2016-06-17.) <https://aliceleung.net/2016/06/17/field-tenor-and-mode-a-literacy-framework-for-all-subjects/>

MARTIN, J. R. (1992). *English Text: System and Structure*. London: Benjamins.

MARTIN, J. R. & MATON, Karl (2017). 'Systemic functional linguistics and Legitimation Code Theory on education: Rethinking field and knowledge structure'. *Onomazein*, SFL, 12-45. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7764/onomazein.sfl.02>

MARTIN, J. R. & ROSE, David (2007). *Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause* (2nd ed.). London: Continuum.

MATON, Karl (2014b). *Knowledge and Knowers: Towards a Realist Sociology of Education*. London: Routledge.

ORWELL, George (1946). 'A Nice Cup of Tea'. First published in the *London Evening Standard*, 12 January 1946.

de SAUSSURE, Ferdinand (1916). *Cours de linguistique générale*. https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Cours_de_linguistique_g%C3%A9n%C3%A9rale/Texte_entier

04.32