

Unit 5

Strata and Error Types

Print version of the
Written Expression Intermediate
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5.1

Goals

The learning goals for today's session are:

1. To explore some higher-level ideological factors that influence
 - (a) what is expressed in text(s)
 - (b) what is left unexpressed, but is simply taken for granted
 - (c) what is left unexpressed, because it is unimaginable
2. To compare various systems for error classification
 - (a) maximalist
 - (b) minimalist
 - (c) more organized
 - (d) less organized

5.2

1 Code and Ideology

The Sydney School

- I have been proposing to work with an explicitly 'genre-based' approach to literacy (reading and writing)...
- ... because it works well in educational settings.
- This approach is grounded in the 'Sydney School' of Systemic Functional Linguistics, as developed by students of M.A.K. Halliday.
- In the work of this school of linguistics, register and genre are treated as 'levels' or 'strata': they describe the context of situation and the context of culture.
- Above genre, there is a further level: ideology.
- And I've included, as part of that level, the notion of 'code' (in Basil Bernstein's sense).
- Halliday and Hasan disagreed with this multistratal approach to describing the context of texts.

5.3

Code (Bernstein)

- Elaborated code:
 - more is expressed in language
 - used where there are fewer shared values
 - only the meanings that are ‘at risk’ are explicitly encoded in the text
 - * i.e. only the meanings that need to be (re)negotiated are in the text.
- Restricted code:
 - much is left implicit
 - * the meanings are present in the situation
 - possible because there are shared values
 - * ‘it’s obvious that that meaning is there’
 - * ‘it doesn’t have to be expressed in language to be real’
 - *Unn? – Jo.*

5.4

What gets “left out” in Text C (The Chamber of the House)? (1)

- If you were students of philosophy or sociology...
- I would simply present you with a text and ask you to analyse its ideological standpoint.
- I wouldn’t worry about whether you had a linguistic framework to fall back on.
-
- But because you are students of language...
- I’ll ask you to look at the grammar.
- <http://www.spence.saar.de/courses/writtenexpression/texts/index.pdf> and scroll to page 3, where you will see Text C: The Chamber of the House
- List the processes in the first paragraph where the clause is passive and the agent is omitted. (Include infinitive constructions and “ing” constructions—anything that has ‘valence’ i.e. ‘transitivity’)

5.5

What gets “left out” in Text C (The Chamber of the House)? (2)

- Some agents we are told about:
 - architects
 - the (House of) Commons
 - German bombing
 - a fire
- Some agents we are not told about:
 - workers
 - * who built these buildings?
 - * the construction isn’t even mentioned!
 - cf: <https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/peking-review/1977/PR1977-23.pdf> (see pages 4 and 5)
 - royalty
 - * who opened the present Chamber?
 - * who made St Stephen’s Chapel available?
 - cf: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/royal-family/2018/11/06/age-no-barrier-queen-duke-ride-windsor-castle/> (now behind paywall; so see: http://www.spence.saar.de/courses/writtenexpression/unit05_20251/C__Screen_Recordings_RECYCLED/2020_1_WE_Wk_05-2.mp4 starting at 5m40s)

5.6

Functions of the passive in English

- The passive in English is not primarily used to represent ‘suffering’ — it does not serve a ‘representational’ or ‘experiential’ function.
- The passive in English mainly serves a ‘textual’ function – its helps to make the text flow smoothly, so readers know where they are, where the text is going, and what the important information is.
- The passive in English is used so that the logical object can be taken as the topic (by being put first, and in English it is most natural to put the grammatical subject first, so ...) *The Chamber of the House was designed/opened/used/destroyed...*
- The passive in English is used so that the agent of an action can be left out: *St. Stephen’s Chapel was made available*
- The passive in English is used so that the agent of an action can be emphasized by being put last (‘the main point’; ‘the take-home message’) *The present Chamber of the House of Commons was designed by the late Sir Giles Gilbert Scott*

5.7

Drahtziehmaschinenwerk Grüna

- The Economic and Monetary Union between the GDR and the FRG (1 July 1990) and the Reunification of Germany that followed (3 October 1990) posed serious challenges for East German industrial companies.
- Here, one of them is trying to manage the ideological and semantic shift from a planned socialist economy to an unplanned capitalist economy, by publishing an image brochure.
- Two alternative English translations are provided: <http://www.spence.saar.de/courses/writtenexpression/GRUENA/GRUENA.pdf>
- Which do you prefer?
- Why?

5.8

Lines of disjunction (Lemke)

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jay_Lemke
- In the modern world, these three discourses must be kept separate (i.e. there are lines of disjunction in place to keep them apart):
 - the discourse of truth
 - the discourse of beauty
 - the discourse of justice
- If I ask you to write me a Wikipedia article, do not try to produce a piece of verbal art. Produce an encyclopaedia article. Do not do politics. And keep religious faith out of it(!)
- And above all, remember you are pretending to be writing not for me, but for an anonymous stranger.

5.9

Social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann)

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Social_Construction_of_Reality
- Well, I guess I’d better be heading off to work.
 - Okay honey. Don’t forget your keys.
- Well, I guess I’d better be heading off to work.
 - Okay honey. Don’t forget your gun.
- Well, I guess I’d better be heading off to work.
 - Okay honey. Don’t forget your mask.

5.10

Ideology in Texts A, B, C, and D

- A: The English Constitution develops organically, like a tree. Random historical events affect its development at least as much as does the conscious intervention of wise leaders.
- B: Salesgirls have to learn to project their own beauty onto the expensive things they are trying to sell for their employer.
- C: The Chamber of the House of Commons is small and impractical, but tradition is more important than rationality.
- D: In the Galilean/ Newtonian world we live in, explanations are in terms of forces that act on objects and affect their movement. Exceptions require explanations. A child can speak without being spoken to.

5.11

2 Error classification and quality assessment

Three systems compared

Compare the three systems for translation quality assessment that are documented in the handout:

http://www.spence.saar.de/courses/writtenexpression/unit05_20251/B__Additional_Handout/02_korrkonv.pdf

5.12

A maximalist system for classifying (Robert Spence)

METAFUNCTION → —ideational— —interpersonal— —textual—

STRATUM

↓

IDEOLOGY

(CODE)

GENRE

REGISTER

Field

Tenor

Mode

DISCOURSE

Ideation &

Negotiation &

Tracking &

SEMANTICS

Conjunction

Appraisal

Periodicity

LEXICO-

GRAMMAR

experiential

logical

interpersonal

textual

— clause

TRANSITIVITY

MOOD / MODALITY

THEME

— group

— word

ORTHOGRAPHY

,

n't

GRAPHETICS

5.13

Punctuation marks in English

Given that we are going to be having many... shall I say... 'disagreements' about punctuation over the next few weeks, ...

it might be a good idea to go over the names of all the punctuation marks:

http://www.spence.saar.de/courses/writtenexpression/unit05_20251/B__Additional_Handout/03_punctuation_table.pdf

03_punctuation_table.pdf

Source: M.A.K. Halliday (1985) *Spoken and Written Language*. Deakin University Press.

("SWL")

5.14

A minimalist system for assessing (Rita Green)

- Rita Green is a leading expert in the area of assessment:
<https://fr.scribd.com/presentation/234470183/Principles-of-Language-Testing-Rita-Green>
- Early in winter semester 2019/2020, the English Department organized a three-day workshop with Dr. Green.
- She tore us apart. The L&U exams (now “L in U” exams), the systems for correcting writing tasks, ... everything:
- We failed.
- Rita Green’s framework for assessing writing, which is a simplification of the IELTS framework, ended up looking like this when I tried it out a few semesters ago for the first writing task of my Written Expression course:
 - Task Achievement
 - (Lexical and grammatical) Range
 - (Lexical and grammatical) Accuracy
 - Structure and Layout
- If you are adventurous, we could repeat the experiment...

5.15

3 Homework for Week 06

Homework for Week 06

In week 06 we will look more closely at the grammar involved in making information flow smoothly in well-structured paragraphs.

The homework will be posted in subdirectory D and a link will be sent by email. (In an ideal universe, it is already there...

http://www.spence.saar.de/courses/writtenexpression/unit05_20251/D__Preparing_for_Week_06/preparingforweek06.pdf

and there is no need for an email, except to remind you.)

A brief reminder: in “was destroyed”, the main (lexical) verb is “destroy”, and “was” is merely a finite auxiliary verb that encodes simple past tense and passive voice. So if we are told that something was destroyed, we are being told about ‘destruction’, not about ‘being’. (In an ideal universe, no students would ever have problems with this.)

5.16