

The Third Halliday-Hasan International Forum on Language

THEME:

Register in Context: New Questions and Possibilities

Chair

Xiaohong ZHANG

Convenors

(Alex) Xuanwei PENG & Geoff WILLIAMS

Co-held by

Guangdong University of Foreign Studies & Shenzhen University

Venue

Shenzhen University

Time

28 -- 29 November, 2018

Co-Organizers:

The Centre for Linguistics and Applied Linguistics
Guangdong University of Foreign Studies

The Halliday-Hasan International Fund
School of Foreign Languages and Literature, Shenzhen University

The 3rd Halliday-Hasan International Forum on Language

The 3rd Halliday-Hasan International Forum on Language, supported by The Halliday-Hasan International Fund for the Study of Language and Other Systems of Meaning at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, will be held on **28-29 November 2018 at Shenzhen University, Shenzhen, China**. The theme of the Forum is **Register in Context: New Questions and Possibilities**.

Since Halliday first advanced his proposals there have been many other, in some cases conflicting, proposals about register in the SFL framework. This Forum is intended to advance new theoretical proposals, challenge existing ideas, and/or introduce significant new research evidence about register and register variation.

Invited keynote speakers are:

1. Wendy Bowcher, Sun Yat-sen University, China
2. Neda Karimi, Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research, Sydney, Australia
3. Annabelle Lukin, Macquarie University, Australia
4. Christian Matthiessen, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, China
5. Alison Moore, University of Wollongong, Australia
6. Stella Neumann, Aachen University, Germany
7. Gerard O'Grady, Cardiff University, United Kingdom
8. Kazu Teruya, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, China

The Forum registration is now open: email to hhifslosm@163.com. The registration fee, which covers two lunch meals (28th and 29th) and a dinner (28th evening), is 1,200 Chinese Yuan (less than 200 US dollars), to be paid during the whole day of 27 November at the School of Foreign Languages and Literature, or the morning of 28th at the Forum venue, Shenzhen University.

2018 Forum Programme

(The Lecture Hall of the Science & Technology Building, ShenzhenU, 28-29 November, 2018)

Date	Time Span	Event
27Nov	14:30-21:00	Registration: Lobby of Sentosa Hotel (Taoyuan Branch) (圣淘沙宾馆桃园店)

Date	Time Spans	Events	Chairs	
28 Nov	08:00-09:00	Registration: Outside of the Lecture Hall of the Science & Technology Building(科技楼一层大厅)		
	※ 09:00-09:30	Opening Ceremony and welcome speech of the Forum by Leader of Shenzhen University and Dean of School of Foreign Languages and Literature; Photo Taking		
	1 09:30-10:30	Keynote Speech	Alison MOORE: Progress and tensions in modelling register as a semantic configuration	Jeroen WEIJER
	10:30-10:50	<i>Tea Break</i>		
	2 10:50-11:50	Keynote Speech	Stella NEUMANN: Register variation and regional varieties	Nana JIN
	12:00-14:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>		
	3 14:00-15:00	Keynote Speech	Gerard O'GRADY: Is there a role for prosody within register studies: and if so what and how?	Yuting LIN
	15:00-15:20	<i>Tea Break</i>		
4 15:20-16:20	Keynote Speech	Wendy BOWCHER: Multimodality and incorporating the non-linguistic in SFL theory: A focus on context of situation and register	Jin WANG	

		16:20-16:40	<i>Tea Break</i>			
		16:40-17:40	Keynote Speech	Reviews and Comments on Keynote Presentations 1 – 4	Geoff WILLIAMS	
		18:00-	<i>Dinner</i>			
29 Nov	5	09:20-10:20	Keynote Speech	Christian MATTHIESSEN: Approaching register trinocularly	Yuanyuan SHANG	
		10:20-10:40	<i>Tea Break</i>			
	6	10:40-11:40	Keynote Speech	Kazu TERUYA: Register as a tool for learning about language systemic functionally	Heidi WANG	
		11:50-13:50	<i>Lunch Break</i>			
	7	13:50-14:50	Keynote Speech	Neda KARIMI: Person-centred oncological care: A register analysis of oncology consultations between oncologists and patients with advanced incurable cancer	Man HUANG	
		14:50-15:10	<i>Tea Break</i>			
	8	15:10-16:10	Keynote Speech	Annabelle LUKIN: Ideology and the cline of instantiation: system, instance, register	Wenge CHEN	
		16:10-16:30	<i>Tea Break</i>			
		16:30-17:30	Reviews and Comments on Keynote Presentations 5 – 8 and all			Geoff WILLIAMS
		※	17:30-17:50	<i>Closing Ceremony</i>		Alex PENG
		18:00-	<i>Dinner</i>			

The Abstracts

(In alphabetic order of last names)

Multimodality and incorporating the non-linguistic in SFL theory:

A focus on context of situation and register

Wendy L. Bowcher

Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, CHINA

It has been argued that the rise in multimodal text analysis informed by the Systemic Functional theoretical framework represents “a shift in focus in linguistic enquiry where language use is no longer theorized as an isolated phenomenon” rather, “the analysis and interpretation of language use is contextualized in conjunction with other semiotic resources which are simultaneously used for the construction of meaning” (O’Halloran 2004:1). However, since its inception, SFL theory has, in principle, accommodated the notion of multimodal texts and situations. For instance, in describing register variation and the motivating contextual features, Halliday et al. (1964: 90-91) make reference to a range of

situations from those in which “the language activity accounts for practically the whole of the relevant activity, such as an essay” to those “in which the language activity rarely plays more than a minor part.”

For multimodal discourse analyses informed by SFL theory, the typical analytical approach is to use the metafunctional systems as a basis to interpret choices across different semiotic systems, with the implication being that the semantic categories of ‘ideational’, ‘interpersonal’ and ‘textual’ are appropriate for describing the meanings of non-linguistic semiotic systems, albeit through broadening their definitions and, at times, with terminological variation such as ‘representation’ for experiential meaning or ‘compositional’ for textual meaning (see Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; O’Toole 2011 respectively; see Jewitt (2009) for a summary of SFL-informed multimodal discourse analysis). Further, across the literature in multimodal text analysis, whether implied or explicitly addressed, is the general SFL stratal framework: context – meaning – grammar. For instance, the focus of Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) seminal work, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* is primarily on the ‘grammar – meaning’ interface.

These moves to extend the concepts of SFL theory to multimodal text analysis have generally been favourably met, with Halliday himself expressing a positive attitude towards the extension of SFL theory to multimodal texts/contexts as part of the theory’s aim to be ‘applicable’ (Halliday 2009: 86).

Nevertheless, key concepts in SFL theory such as ‘context of situation’, ‘register’ and ‘meaning’ are *linguistically* construed/realised or wholly *linguistic* categories as explained in the following sample quotations:

“the context of situation is encapsulated in the text, not in a kind of piecemeal fashion ... but through a systematic relationship between the social environment on the one hand, and the functional organization of language on the other” (Halliday 1985: 11).

“A register is a text type seen from the ‘system’ end, as a functionally motivated subsystem within a language that is characterized by a ‘general (or generalized’) structure potential and by distinctive (usually quantitative) patterns of selection within the lexicogrammar and semantics” (Halliday and Webster 2009: 246).

“Text is language in operation” (Halliday 1977/2002: 26).

“A text ... is a semantic unit, which is not composed of sentences but is realized in sentences. A text is to the semantic system what a clause is to the lexicogrammatical system” (Halliday 1977/2002: 46).

Thus, while SFL theory provides a useful and generally applicable framework for analyzing multimodal situations, concepts from the theory are defined from the perspective of a theory of language not a theory of multimodal exchange. Therefore, using such terms and concepts in relation to multimodal contexts/texts, researchers run the risk of those terms and concepts becoming vague and imprecise, or worse still, not problematized at all, such that one analyst’s understanding of the multimodal realization of ‘meaning’ or of the concept of ‘context of situation’ may differ considerably from another’s. This kind of problem has been raised within multimodal discourse analysis itself, for instance, in critiques of the use of the term ‘mode’, or ‘multimodal genre’ (see Forceville 2014; Kress 2009; Stöckl 2015).

Issues with regard to the relations between language and non-linguistic matter in SFL theory have occasionally been raised (see Bartlett 2013; Bowcher 2007, 2013, 2014; Hasan 2001, 2009, 2014; Matthiessen 2007), with Hasan arguing unambiguously that “linguistics need to recognize both faces of action [WB: the non-linguistic and the linguistic] if it is to explain how the two might co-operate within the same activity when they are co-present” (Hasan 1999: 275). Some attempts have been made to incorporate non-linguistic features into the SFL theoretical framework, such as the development of the concept of Material Situational Setting (e.g. Hasan 2009), discussions on Material Action in context of situation (Bowcher 2007, 2013, 2014; Hasan 1999, 2009), the suggestion of the “ARC template” for social practices (Hasan 2001, 2014), the proposal of a multiscale model of context (see Bartlett 2016, 2017), and an outline of the concept of a “multidimensional semiotic space” created across various dimensions of the SFL theory of language (Matthiessen 2007). These ideas provide a useful springboard from which a closer look at specific dimensions of the theory can be explored in order to work out how non-linguistic phenomena could be brought within the framework of SFL theory as it currently stands. I am not referring here to the utilization and/or modification of SFL concepts within multimodal text analysis, or of developing analytical models. There are, as Stöckl (2015) points out, ample models for analysis. Rather, what I am referring to here is the possible place of non-linguistic semiotic phenomena within a theory of language and in relation to theoretical concepts that are currently defined primarily along linguistic grounds.

Part of the reason why SFL theoretical concepts have been so amenable to extension into analyzing non-linguistic semiotic phenomena is that SFL theory represents a social semiotic approach to the study of meaning – one which recognizes that language is one of many semiotic systems through which choices are made which realize socio-cultural systems. Through contextually motivated selections, these choices play a role in changing, modifying and/or maintaining the socio-cultural system. However, to what extent a theory of language needs to account for non-linguistic phenomena is a key underlying question. If the answer is that it does not need to incorporate into its model of language non-linguistic phenomena, then explaining how the two co-operate is left outside the theory and the problem remains unsolved. If it is deemed that there should be incorporated into the theoretical framework some account of the relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic matter and meaning, then a range of questions seem to emerge. That is, while multimodal analyses might utilize concepts from the theory, is it worthwhile to refine the definitions of these concepts to take into account their linguistic and non-linguistic characteristics? In doing so, what adjustments across the various dimensions of the architecture of language would be required (for a brief summary of these dimensions see Halliday and Webster 2009: 231)? Given that language-in-use perhaps more often than not involves other modes of communication, and is itself a multimodal phenomenon (cf. Matthiessen 2007), where might non-linguistic and paralinguistic phenomena be located within the general architecture of language according to SFL theory? If such phenomena are of value in understanding the nature of language, how and where might this non-linguistic semiotic matter be theorized and located in the theory? Further, if there is a place for non-linguistic matter to be accounted for in the theory, would key concepts require complete re-theorizing, or would it be more useful to model linguistic concepts as parallel with non-linguistic ones. For instance, how might the theory accommodate the relationship between the linguistic concept of register and a multimodal concept of register? And if it is agreed that context of situation and specifically '*relevant* context of situation' is entirely linguistically-construed (e.g. Hasan 2009), does non-linguistically construed context have a place in the model of language if it is playing a role in the interpretation of the language being used, and particularly if its features are playing more than a referential role (cf. Bartlett 2013; Bowcher 2018)?

This presentation proposes some ideas in the directions suggested here and points out some of the theoretical issues involved in incorporating non-linguistic semiotic systems into the SFL model of language with a specific emphasis on the concepts of register and context of situation.

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Person-centred oncological care:

A register analysis of oncology consultations between oncologists and patients with advanced incurable cancer

Neda Karimi

Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research, Sydney, Australia

SFL is an applicable linguistics: it has the capacity to be applied to solve problems in different communities and institutions (Halliday, 1985; Halliday, 2007 [2002]; Matthiessen, 2012). Health is one of the institutions SFL has contributed to since its early stages of development in the 60s (see Moore (in press for 2019) for a comprehensive review) and is the focus of the present paper. In this paper, variations within the institution of oncology consultation are examined using Halliday's concept of register. Register is defined as "a variety of language, corresponding to a variety of situation" (Halliday, 1985, p. 38), "a configuration of meanings that are typically associated with a particular situational configuration of field, mode and tenor" (ibid., pp. 38-9). Variations within the institution of oncology consultation are explored through a register analysis of a corpus of oncology consultations between oncologists and patients with advanced incurable cancer (and their companions). Hasan's paradigmatic account of field, tenor, and mode (Hasan, 2014, 2016 [2014]) and her model of semantics network systems (Hasan, 1983, 2009 [1989], 2009 [1991]) are used to explore the nuances of meanings made by different oncologists during their consultation with advanced cancer patients. As a "post-Saussurean theory whose aim is to provide a scientific account of both the system (langue) and the use of language (parole)" (Hasan, 2016 [2014], p. 389), Halliday's SFL and within that Hasan's paradigmatic account of context has previously proved to be useful in describing the context of oncology consultation and the instantiated cultural institutions (Karimi, Moore, & Lukin, 2018). The present paper extends the account of oncology consultation provided by Karimi et al. (2018) to link that to an analysis of the semantics of oncology consultation. The bigger aim is to explore how patient-centred oncological care is operationalised in language.

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Ideology and the cline of instantiation: System, instance, register

Annabelle Lukin

Macquarie University

Ideology is an important theme in the writings of both Halliday and Hasan. Both have reflected on ideology in relation to language as a system and as instance, including reflections on ideology in relation to the central SFL concept of register. This paper will present a summary of Halliday's and Hasan's views on ideology in relation to the concepts of system and instance, before then giving particular focus to the relationship between ideology and register. Since all texts reflect register variation at the same time that all texts display ideological variation, then these two vectors of variation must intersect. Halliday has, for instance, suggested there is a distinction between registers that are more transparent by having a "fairly direct link" between their social context and their linguistic features, and registers which "present a more or less discordant mix of multiple voices" because their "context embodies internal contradictions and conflicts" (Halliday 2007: 117-18). Meanwhile, Hasan has argued that ideology is a form of intra-registerial variation (Hasan 2009). The aim of this discussion is to evaluate the usefulness of the concept of register in relation to understanding the power of ideology, with a particular focus on ideologies legitimating forms of organized violence (Lukin 2018).

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Approaching register trinocularly

Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Like many other linguistic phenomena, or indeed more generally semiotic ones, register — or more helpfully, register variation — has proved to be “slippery”. This is partly because semiotic phenomena are inherently hard to pin down: they exist (or unfold) as semiotic phenomena, of course, but at the same time are also (enacted) as social phenomena, (embodied) as biological phenomena, and (ultimately manifested) as physical phenomena. And within their own order of phenomena, while they are located stratally, they derive their value from their stratal neighbourhood, and (crucially) they are extended somewhere along the cline of instantiation. The slippery nature of register is reflected in the history of the term in Systemic Functional Linguistics. Taken from Reid (1956) by Halliday and his colleagues in the 1960s (e.g. Halliday, McIntosh & Strevens 1964; Gregory 1967), the term register meant registerial variation — functional variation in language according to context of use; it reflected the nature of language as an adaptive system. However, in J.R. Martin’s work, the term slipped stratally from language into context, and it came to stand for the contextual variables implicated in functional variation, i.e. field, tenor and mode. Martin has documented this terminological slippage very clearly and carefully (e.g. 1992). So terminologically, we now have two distinct (but related) uses of the term register— its original and still current sense of functional variation, and its later sense as (roughly) situation type. But the phenomenon of functional variation — register variation — is still recognized, regardless of the terminology (cf. Martin 2010). In what follows I use register in its original sense of functional variation.

The slippery nature of the phenomenon of register variation makes me think of one of M.A.K. Halliday’s technical terms, viz. “semantic slime”. He had in mind, in the first instance, the semantic slime that accompanies terms as they slide from everyday use to technical-scientific use; but

perhaps we need to recognize such slime also when terms such as register slither from one theoretical area to another. (And of course, “register” is also used with other senses in linguistics, as in phonetics.)

Fortunately, SFL comes with a theoretical principle, and method, that enables us to deal with slippery phenomena like register. This is Halliday’s trinocular vision (spelled out by him and others in many places, e.g. Halliday 1978, 1979, 1996; Halliday & Matthiessen 2004). The principle is simple but very powerful: since the systemic functional theory of the “architecture” of language is relational in nature (rather than modular), and is based on intersecting semiotic dimensions like the hierarchy of stratification (cf. Matthiessen 2007), the cline of instantiation and the spectrum of metafunctions, we can shunt along these dimensions (cf. Halliday 1961, on shunting — borrowed from the railways) and adopt different observer points, viewing phenomena trinocularly. Halliday (e.g. 1978) worked this out for the hierarchy of stratification: any phenomenon can be viewed “from above” (from a higher stratum), “from below” (from a lower stratum) and “from roundabout” (from its own stratum, its own primary location). Register variation is semantic variation in the first instance, so its primary location is the stratum of semantics. Consequently, when we view it “from above”, we look at it from the point of view of context, when we view it “from below”, we look at it from the point of view of lexicogrammar (and by further steps, phonology, and then phonetics, or graphology, and then graphetics).

Now, I think that Halliday’s trinocular vision can be applied to all semiotic dimensions, not only to the hierarchy of stratification, where it was first applied. For instance, locally within a stratum, we can use it to move up and down the rank scale as we adopt different views on some particular phenomenon. While I think this is by now a well-known extension of the use of trinocular vision, I believe it is still helpful to view register trinocularly in terms of all the relevant semiotic dimensions, and this is what I propose to focus on in my talk:

- **global semiotic dimensions:**
 - **the hierarchy of stratification:** register viewed from above — contextual variables and values; register viewed from below — lexicogrammatical realizations (and lower-stratal ones as well); register viewed from roundabout — registers as “meanings at risk”;
 - **the cline of instantiation:** register viewed from above — from the point of view of the overall meaning potential: registers as subpotentials [with potentially distinct probabilities of instantiation]; register viewed from below — from the point of view of instances of this potential, i.e. texts as flow of meaning: registers as particular patterns (in context of situation), possibly emergent as new adaptations detectable at first as text types [with new relative frequencies]; register viewed from roundabout — the point

of view of the mid-region of the cline of instantiation, between potential and instance: registers as systems of semantic strategies adapted to institutional settings (as in Halliday 1973, and Patten 1988).

- **the spectrum of metafunction:** all metafunctions (and their contextual correlates) are equally involved in the characterization of register, but we still benefit from viewing registers horizontally as it were — ideationally (logically, experientially), interpersonally and textually.
- **local semiotic dimensions:**
 - **the hierarchy of rank:** any given register will extend across all of the relevant ranks of the semantic rank scale, but we still need to shunt along this hierarchy, viewing texts as instantiating particular registers (and so the registers themselves) both from the highest rank and the lowest rank, making sure that they meet in the middle. (The question whether there is one general semantic rank scale, comparable to the general rank scales in lexicogrammar and phonology is a very interesting one, but a tough one to answer since it depends on extremely extensive analysis of texts from a vast number of different registers, and nobody has even come close in any framework. I suspect it will turn out that the semantic rank scale needs to be differentiated both metafunctionally and registerially. And it is also important to note that rank is as it were experientially biased; the other metafunctional modes have complementary models for dealing with “composition” — including the logical one of complexing, which is what Bill Mann, Sandy Thompson and I focussed on when the developer RST [Rhetorical Structure Theory].)
 - **the hierarchy of axis:** this hierarchy has only two “values”; but any given register can be viewed from above in terms of systemic organization [paradigmatic axis] and from below in terms of structural organization [syntagmatic axis].

If we re-view register trinocularly along the lines that I have suggested, have we covered everything there that needs to be said about register? The short answer is obviously no.

On the one hand, phenomenologically, we also need to consider the ordered typology of systems operating in different phenomenal domains into account, viewing register not only semiotically, but also social, biologically and physically. For example, we need to take account of the role of register in the complex relationship between social hierarchies and the division of labour, noting the way that register variation and dialect variation intersect. (Many of the semiotic upheavals that we witness today can be related to the physical technology of the Internet — i.e. in the first instance (but not only!) to the rapid changes in the channel of the mode variable of context. The ramifications are extensive, just as when

the printing press was introduced as another new channel technology.)

On the other hand, to address and take account of all the insightful observations that have been made about register (and also the potentially misguided ones), we need to go meta — we need to find or create a framework of observations that transcends SFL since a great deal of very valuable work on register has been done and is being done outside SFL, as will be easy to see once the new pioneering journal *Register Studies* has been launched in 2019).

On the third hand (semiotically, we are not at all limited to our two biological hands — and even this may change Frankenstenially within the biological order of systems if Yuval Noah Harari is on the right track with his vision of *Homo Deus*, his “history” of tomorrow — which I would call a forecast), there are quite a few phenomena that have yet to be interpreted consensually — like ideology (see Lukin 2019) and individuation (discussed by various contributors to Bednarek & Martin 2010). Ideology and individuation are two of the issues in the exploration of language in context that I pointed to in a talk at ALSFAL XIV hosted by BUAP in Puebla (8-12 October, 2018): “Issues: ideology, individuation, institutions; intervention; impact; implementation”. Time permitting, I will try to touch on these issues since I think they are all central to the theme of this Halliday-Hasan Forum, “Register: New Questions and Possibilities”. One central area of impact is education, and fortunately Kazuhiro Teruya will deal with this area in his talk.

This talk is part of my attempt over the years to contribute to our understanding and investigation of register — e.g. Matthiessen (1993, 2015). The focus on register in this third Forum is very timely, also in view of the launch next year of the new journal *Register Studies* that I mentioned above. The first issue will include interviews with scholars dealing with register in different traditions and from different point of departure, and my contribution represents SFL; a later issue will include an interview of me about register, conducted by Wang Bo and Helen Ma.

Progress and tensions in modelling register as a semantic configuration

Alison Rotha Moore

University of Wollongong

In *Language as a Social Semiotic*, Halliday (1978:111) defines register as “the configuration of semantic resources that the member of a culture typically associates with a situation type. It is the meaning potential that is accessible in a given social context”. From this definition one might think that the canonical view of register in SFL is that each socially recognised situation type within a culture has its own register, which in turn implies that the gold standard for what counts as ‘a register’ is whether a culture has a name for the corresponding situation. However, elsewhere Halliday stresses that when we talk of ‘a register’ this is really just a term of convenience: register is more properly theorised as continuous variation along many linguistic dimensions, although in practice “only a small fraction of the theoretically possible combinations of linguistic features will actually be found to occur” (2007[1990]:168). This difference is not a change in view, since as early as 1964 Halliday (2007[1964]) argued that registers are defined by formal (linguistic) not situational properties: “if two samples of language activity from what, on non-linguistic grounds, could be considered different situation-types show no differences in grammar or lexis, they are assigned to one and the same register: for the purpose of the description of the language there is only one situation type here, not two”.

In this paper I review how far we have come in our capacity to describe register and context of situation, and to what degree of specificity. I ask whether the tension between concepts of register outlined above is a productive tension or a hindrance to progress in register theory and register studies, considering in particular the affordances of Hasan’s (1983, 2013) contextually-open networked model of message semantics, which I argue still needs to be tested across a large and varied enough set of domains to accurately gauge their capacity to specify register variation (Moore 2017). Examples from studies of healthcare interaction and studies of the representation of animals are used to ground the

discussion.

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Register variation and regional varieties

Stella Neumann

RWTH Aachen University

In this paper I will discuss the role of register variation across different regional varieties of English.

In SFL, questions of user-related variation are traditionally not the focus of attention as this type of dialectal variation refers to "different ways of saying the same thing", whereas register refers to different "ways of saying different things" (Halliday 1978, 185), which appears to be more interesting given the concentration of SFL on language as a meaning potential. Register then is the semantic reflection of situation types and, crucially, situations are claimed to be embedded in a cultural context. However, languages like Chinese, Spanish, French, German and English are not only spoken in one particular more or less identifiable culture, but are spoken by members of different, fairly clearly distinguishable cultures. In many cases, these languages are the first language of members of the different cultures. In other cases, the languages play an important and sometimes official role in the culture. English in South Africa is a case in point. Such language situations represent interesting test beds for claims about the relationship between register on the one hand and culture as the backdrop against which such social processes, i.e. situation types, develop on the other. I will address this general question by exploring linguistic variation in different regional varieties of Englishes.

To this end, I will analyse a large corpus representing different varieties of English by combining several components of the International Corpus of English (Nelson, Wallis and Aarts 2002). Since register is a social phenomenon that emerges out of similar recurring linguistic behaviour in a group of language users, a quantitative research methodology is useful to establish language users' linguistic choices in a given situation type. The corpus will be analysed for a wide range of lexico-grammatical features derived from register theory (see Neumann 2014) and subjected to

exploratory multivariate statistical analysis (see, e.g., Evert and Neumann 2017) in order to examine to what extent comparable registers display similarities or differences across varieties. This empirical approach will allow me to draw some preliminary conclusions about the above general question: If differences between comparable registers across varieties prevail, the claim that context of situation is indeed embedded in cultural context will be corroborated. However, preliminary studies (Neumann 2012, Neumann and Fest 2016) suggest that similarities between texts from comparable registers across different varieties outweigh the differences. This would suggest that the conceptualisation of the relationship between situation and culture will have to be reconsidered.

Further questions of interest for analysing the interaction between functional and regional variation within a language concern the question of what counts as a language in the first place (and consequently as relevant data), and – in the long term – what would be a systemic-functional conceptualisation of creole languages.

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Is there a role for prosody within register studies: And if so what and how?

Gerard O'Grady

Cardiff University

Register can be understood either as a functional variety of language (Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens 1964) or as a stratum within the contextual stratum (Martin and Rose 2007). In this paper, I will use the term to refer to the former and not the latter meaning. As a functional variety of language, a register is situated along the cline of instantiation where it represents a particular configuration of semantic choices which are realized by the lexicogrammar at the next stratum down or it can be defined as a systemic resetting of the probabilities in the texts belonging to the register (Halliday 1978, Lemke 1995). Such definitions entail the marginality of prosody in register studies. Even differences between what has traditionally been classified as a binary distinction between spoken and written texts are described in terms of lexicogrammatical features such as lexical density, tactic relations and the deployment of grammatical metaphor (Halliday 1987/2002).

As is well known, Halliday's views on stratification were influenced by Hjelmslev (1961) who stratified language into content-form and expression-form and within each level into substance and purport. Taverniers (2011: 1114) illustrates that it is generally understood that the SFL strata of semantics and lexicogrammar map on to content-form purport and substance respectively. Similarly, the SFL strata of phonology and phonetics map onto expression-form substance and purport. And following Halliday (1992/2002) the recasting of realization in terms of metaredundancy relations has enabled SFL theorists to propose semantic networks corresponding to the three metafunctions. But note textual networks only model theme choices (Taverniers 2011: 1109). In other words, there are no networks modelling textual, interpersonal and logical prosodic choices in the semantic stratum. But if prosody is absent from the semantic stratum, it is hard to see how it can fit into a description of register.

In the next two paragraphs, I will suggest a possible means of situating prosody by examining two types of texts. Firstly, a political speech and a political interview represent examples of a particular register namely a report with both sharing experiential meanings realising the field variables of context though not the interpersonal meanings realizing the tenor ones. Similarly, a written weather report and an audio weather report on a website are representatives of the reporting register with a difference primarily in mode variables. But actually the differences between variables in the political text and the weather report are themselves “a difference that may itself lead to a difference” (Bateson 1972). In the political texts, the monologic or dialogic nature of the channel within mode is realized by a particular configuration of semantic features which in turn are realized by lexicogrammatical features. But in the weather reports the difference would initially appear to be only that one of the texts was read aloud. This again raises the question of whether prosody plays any role in identifying register. Could we simply talk about differences in the nature of the channel within mode between text types within the same register?

Yet, if we zoom in on the two weather forecasts taken from BBC weather website September 25th 2018, more appears to be going on. The short written forecast presented on the website makes little sense if read aloud. I will argue that this is because of its telegram-like nature which means that it comprises almost totally new information. Hence when perceived as a flow of sequential information it is difficult to parse. Conversely, while the spoken text of the weather forecast was first written, it contains much information that is redundant and as a written piece would appear to be in urgent need of editing and reducing. While the two texts do not vary significantly in either field or tenor variables, they do differ significantly in how they are organised informationally. I will show that it is the combination of prosodic and thematic choices which creates the meanings that brings the spoken text to life. And that without the redundant elements, the spoken weather forecast would be harder to comprehend. To sum up the absence or presence of a spoken channel leads to a novel combination of meanings which may help define registerial differences in individual contexts.

Next, I will examine in detail a short political speech in order to illustrate how the speaker’s prosodic choices combined with his lexicogrammatical choices to produce ad hoc meanings: what appears from the written text to be a report is actually a combination of report and argument (O’Grady 2013). Thus, what initially appeared redundant in the realization of the prosodic choices is in fact creative and enables the speaker to produce new meaning through the recombination of lexicogrammatical and prosodic choices.

The data presented here potentially open a discussion on prosodic choices leading to registerial instantiations. If this in fact proves to be the case,

there will be a need to expressly model prosodic networks in the semantic stratum. There will be a further need to consider whether or not the stratal view of realizational relationships needs to be amended to allow for the potential for meaning to be in some cases realised as composing without being first realised as wording. In other words, perhaps some meanings predict and are predicted by prosodic choices.

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Register as a tool for learning about language systemic functionally

Kazuhiro Teruya

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

In this paper, I will approach “register in context” from the instance end of the cline of instantiation at the stratum of context in the instantiation/stratification matrix proposed by Halliday (1995/2005), taking the register as a functional variety of a language (Halliday 1985/185), or “the adaptation of the meaning-making resources of a language according to context of use” (Matthiessen 2015). By doing so, I can begin to investigate register variation by correlating the contextual variables of field, tenor, and mode with the patterns of semantic and lexicogrammar that emerge in text instances.

Here I will focus on register variation in relation to values within field, more specifically field of activity (rather than field of experience, or experiential domain — “subject matter”), using a typology of fields of activity consisting of eight primary types: ‘expounding’, ‘reporting’, ‘recreating’, ‘sharing’, ‘doing’, ‘enabling’, ‘recommending’ and ‘exploring’ (Matthiessen 2006, Teruya 2007, Teruya 2009, Matthiessen 2015, Matthiessen & Teruya 2016).

I will then relate register variation to learning in terms of Halliday’s three aspects — learning language, learning through language, learning about language (Halliday, 1980/ 2003) — by defining language learning as learning (about/through) variation in the overall semiotic potential of language, a potential whose probabilities are being reset according to the meanings at risk in a given register or in a particular type of texts. In this endeavour, I will present some examples from the courses I teach at PolyU.

To conclude, I will emphasize the importance of the use of the text typology in learning semiotic variation of language because using this typology then enables us to locate each instance within some specific register, within which its semantic and lexicogrammatical variation can be systematically captured by describing these variable instances in relation to theoretical terms that empower learners through grammatical thinking (Teruya 2006). Learning can thus be interpreted as including the gradual expansion of a learner's personal repertoire of registers; and as learners expand their registerial repertoires, they become able to take on a growing number of roles in the contexts in which these registers operate.

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