A tribute to M.A.K.Halliday

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Abstract:

M.A.K. Halliday

The tribute below commemorates the life and work of Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday by offering a brief biographical sketch, by reviewing his work in terms of key concepts and methodological development, and by highlighting his perspective on the dialectical relationship between theory and application, so fundamental for his approach to linguistics. An attempt will finally be made to assess his contributions to linguistics and to bring out his general underlying socio-cultural commitment visible in his advocacy of an “appliable linguistics”.

1. Life and Work[1]

1.1 Biographical background

[1] Many of the works referred to here are available in the altogether 11 volumes of collected works of Halliday, edited and made accessible by Jonathan Webster and Bloomsbury-Continuum between 2002 and 2017.

We shall restrict ourselves here to essential stages of Halliday's life as a background to his work in linguistics. Longer and more detailed biographies can be found in several places. The account given below has as its main background Webster's excellent biography of Halliday (Webster. ed. 2015: 3-16), as well as my own personal conversations with Michael Halliday between the mid-1980s and his passing away in April 2018. Comprehensive background material is also accessible in Martin ed. 2013.

Halliday was born in Leeds, Yorkshire (England) on 13 April 1925 to his mother, a teacher of French, and his father, a teacher of English with a profound interest in grammar and literature. Halliday's school experience involved classical texts and classical history, while English literature provided the only formal contact with the language of more recent periods. His own personal interests centered around China and around language. In early 1942, he entered the national services' foreign language training course (established at the advice of J.R. Firth) and qualified for intensive training in Chinese. After 18 months' training, he entered the services, taught members of the army in Britain and then did a year of service in India with the Chinese Intelligence Unit in Calcutta. The political background to all this was Britain's engagement in the war in Asia, especially against Japan and its occupation of large parts of China. From 1945-1947, he taught Chinese to members of the army back in London. These courses were organized at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), where he both taught others and participated in formal studies of Chinese in the Chinese Department. His academic interest in linguistics thus was embedded in his experiences as a teacher of Chinese. During that same time, he also studied Russian in London. When he won a British Government grant for ex-servicemen to complete his higher education, he used this to travel to Peking (Beijing), where he studied Chinese at Peking University, at the same time teaching English to Chinese students. In June 1948, he successfully completed the University of London examination on Modern Chinese (language and literature) in Nanking, after which he took a job in China working for the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives in the remote rural north of Western China for about 4 months. He then received a scholarship from England for doing 2 more years of postgraduate study of Chinese. The application for that scholarship had in fact been made by Professor Eve Edwards, head of the Chinese Department at SOAS, due to Halliday's excellent results in his examinations. He pursued his studies of Chinese at the University of Peking, initially focusing on historical studies and Sino-Tibetan Studies, but later on with a re-adjusted focus on modern Chinese dialects in Lingnan University (nowadays Sun Yat-sen University) in Canton (Guangzhou). Theoretical influences during that time included Chinese linguistics, some Russian linguistics, but also

general linguistics from J.R. Firth, whom he somewhat later came in contact with in London. These years in China were complicated politically and in terms of everyday life due to the civil wars between nationalists and communists. Travel between Peking and Guangzhou was difficult and dangerous, but Halliday still managed to do intensive comparative studies on Mandarin vs. Cantonese Chinese and the strongly varying dialects in the Pearl River Delta around Guangzhou under Professor Wang Li. In 1950, he had to go back to England to complete his PhD, but was not admitted to SOAS due to his suspected sympathies for communism. This was the period of McCarthyism, so he had to affiliate himself with the Chinese department at Cambridge where a more liberal attitude was adopted. This affiliation with Cambridge was not in itself a problem, but Cambridge at the time had classical Chinese studies only, and Halliday's intended supervisor Firth was at SOAS in London. So, his supervisor Gustav Haloun, Professor of Chinese at Cambridge, suggested that Halliday work on the C14 Chinese translation of the so-called *Secret History of the Mongols*, a historical Mongolian biography of Genghis Khan, the earliest known longer text in Mandarin Chinese. After Haloun's unexpected death in 1950, Halliday remained inscribed at Cambridge, yet under the external supervision of J.R. Firth. His PhD-analysis of the *Secret History of the Mongols* thus came under the methodological influence of Firthian linguistics, although Halliday's "Systemic Linguistics" published in 1961 as *Categories of the Theory of Grammar* represented a further development beyond Firthian linguistics in some respects. During the time at Cambridge, Halliday closely interacted in his work with colleagues in the Linguistics Group of the British Communist Party, which provided another formative context for his theoretical development. They were particularly interested in non-standard varieties (dialects, spoken language, colloquial rather than formal language, everyday rather than literary, minority rather than majority languages) and in modern rather than classical languages more generally. At the same time, Halliday's engagement with Communist activities was critical rather than passively accepting: he certainly saw language not as a passive reflection of reality, but as a semiotic reality which in turn can become a formative force in cultural and social development. "Condensed into one short paragraph, our own point of departure is the following: Language evolved, in the human species, in two complementary functions: construing experience, and enacting social processes…" (Halliday and Matthiessen 1999: xi). The quality of "construing experience" certainly gives a much more active place to language than we usually find in some deterministic-materialist versions of Marxism – wrongly associated with Marx's philosophy, I believe. The quality of "enacting social processes" refers to the function of language to constitute and bind together social

formations, something clearly associated with a dialectic Marxist view on language. Halliday has sometimes referred to his positon as one of “mild materialism” in personal communication, which I think is a valid characterization. Halliday’s solidarity with Marxism was a critical one, hence his leaving the Communist Party of Great Britain after its failure to critically position itself vis-à-vis Russia’s invasion of Hungary in 1957 (Martin ed. 2013: 133 fn. 5).

After applying unsuccessfully for a position in Firth’s department at SOAS in 1952, he was appointed as Assistant Lecturer in Chinese at Cambridge University in 1954 where he submitted his PhD-thesis at the end of that year. The theoretical underpinning and extension of Firthian linguistics appeared only in 1961 (Halliday 1961), without Firth having seen a final version. Systemic Linguistics in this 1961 version was, while being basically Firthian, at the same time more comprehensive than anything Firth had produced about the theory of grammar. The development towards a comprehensive model of language continued towards the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and ultimately Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) of later years. The comprehensiveness of Halliday’s model, its emphasis on the paradigmatic (systemic) axis and its specific modelling of the (meta-)functional diversification of language from lexicogrammar through semantics and into context do not contradict any of Firth’s basic views on language, but they are much more detailed and explicit than anything Firth was able to produce at his much earlier stage of linguistic theorizing.

Halliday’s time at Cambridge also saw his involvement in machine translation, which however remained a marginal activity for him. Much more central to the development of his ideas was the idea of “register”, related to Firth’s notion of a “restricted language” and to the Marxist interest in language variation and in technical registers in particular. Halliday moved to the University of Edinburgh as a lecturer in general linguistics in 1958, which meant a move away from the dominance of work on Chinese towards applications of linguistics to English teaching. The Edinburgh environment was one in which theory and practice met in a mutually enriching perspective, and it was also one in which his getting acquainted with the socio-linguistic work of Basil Bernstein became a strong momentum towards further development of some socio-linguistic aspects of his work. In the same context he met Ruqaiya Hasan, who moved to Edinburgh in 1960, became one of Halliday’s first doctoral students and later on his wife. From 1963 onwards, they both worked in the Nuffield/ Schools Council Program in Linguistics and English teaching in London, with Halliday as Director of the Communication Research Centre at University College London. This work, and his

involvement in the project into “Linguistic properties of scientific English” provided a decisive context for the further development of Systemic Linguistics reflected in Halliday 1967-68, a landmark publication at its time as far as a multifunctional approach to language, and as far as “participant roles” and “thematic/ information structure” as linguistic concepts were concerned. Halliday’s model of 1961, which was still relatively Firthian, but with an emphasis on the “System” over “Structure”, began to develop into “Systemic *Functional* Linguistics”, thus specifying a generalized multi-functional view on language in terms of *ideational, interpersonal and textual* dimensions where earlier versions and certainly Firth’s work had still been programmatic. From 1965 he became head of department of General Linguistics at University College London, which he then left following a call to the University of British Columbia. Yet, he was prevented from taking office by a refusal of the Canadian government to grant him entry. The following period without a position in academia until late in 1971 gave him time to record the material and produce a description and analysis of the language development of their new born son, later published as *Learning how to mean.* The time between 1971 and 1976 saw him (and Ruqaiya) in visiting appointments at Brown University, University of Nairobi; in a fellowship at the Centre for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences on the UC Stanford Campus; the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle; and the University of Essex. From 1976 onwards, he was Foundation Professor of Linguistics at the University of Sydney until his retirement in 1987. During the 1980s he was also involved in the text generation project “Penman” at the Information Sciences Institute at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, later on also with the COBUILD-project at the University of Birmingham in England. For another 30 years after retirement, Michael Halliday remained highly active in invited visiting positions all around the world, China in particular. There is a constant stream of publications by him right until the time of his death. He passed away in Sydney, close to his last home in Manly/ Sydney, on 15 April 2018, following his colleague and beloved wife Ruqaiya Hasan, who had passed away on 24 June 2015.

Halliday was a fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and of other academies (cf. Webster 2015. ed.: 14), as well as a recipient of numerous awards and honorary doctorates around the world.

1.2. Key concepts and methodology

This section will highlight the development of key concepts and methodology in Halliday's work, while the following one will identify key working contexts for what he calls *appliable linguistics*, particularly in his later years. This concept of *appliable linguistics* is of central importance for an appreciation of Halliday's work:

"… I am talking about a general characteristic of a theory, not its application 'to' this or that particular issue….An appliable linguistics is a way of thinking about language: that is, its immediate scope and context of application. But to be appliable to real-life situations and real-life tasks, it has to be good to think with…"" (Halliday 2010:128 and 141, respectively).

From this general perspective on linguistic theory there follows one fundamental methodological principle of his work: theory and application go hand in hand, mutually influencing and guiding each other. Any sharp division between "theoretical" and "applied", as it is wide-spread in many academic settings, is detrimental to the type of linguistic theory he had in mind.

While Halliday's work biographically started with descriptive work on classical Chinese and a few publications on varied other topics such as linguistic input to machine translation and a "mechanical thesaurus", a first programmatic and fairly comprehensive formulation of his views is his 1961 *Categories of the Theory of Grammar.* In this widely discussed paper, he outlined essential categories of his "Systemic Linguistics", later on "Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)". Together with a few other papers in the journals *Linguistics* and *Journal of Linguistics* within the following years (all usefully collected and edited in Vol. 1 of Webster 2002-2017), he thus presents his model of language in an early form, opening in the modest and co-operative fashion typical of Halliday (Webster ed. 2002-2017, Vol. 1: 37):

There have been in the main two approaches to description in modern linguistics: the "textual" and the "non-textual or, for want of a better word, "exemplificatory". More recently, a third has been added… the "generative". Some linguists have gone so far as to suggest that transformative generation should replace other types of making statements about language. Others, myself included, feel that all three approaches have a fundamental place in linguistics: that they do different things, and that the third is a valuable supplement to the first two.

He does go on to say, though, that he is not offering yet another set of guidelines for language descriptions, but that part of general linguistic theory which is concerned with how

language works at the level of grammar. Somewhat later (p.40) he makes a statement which links up surprisingly well with contemporary and current information-theory based approaches:

> *Language has* ***formal meaning*** *and* ***contextual meaning****. Formal meaning is the "information" of information theory… Contextual meaning, which is an extension of the popular – and traditional linguistic – notion of meaning, is quite distinct from formal meaning and has nothing whatever to do with "information".*

This connection of formal meaning with information theory (nowadays a core idea of *Distributional Semantics* e.g. Boleda and Herbelot 2016) is not surprising for those who are aware of the legacy left by J.R. Firth to the thinking of Halliday. However, it should also be clear that Systemic, and much more so later Systemic Functional Theory, belong into the family of symbol-processing based approaches and in that respect are methodologically very different from the extreme "bottom-up empiricism" of information theory in some of its applications to natural language (cf. Gleick 2011, Hale 2016). But it is a fundamental principle of Halliday's linguistics that it recognizes both "formal" and "contextual" meaning, which between the 1960s and the early 2000s was very rare in linguistics.

Halliday's "Systemic Linguistics" gradually grew into "Systemic Functional Linguistics" (SFL) with "Systemic Functional Grammar" (SFG) as its grammatical core through the development of several functional layers in parallel with the structural categories (units) of his 1961 version. Phrase Structure is mapped onto three functional layers, the "(ideational, interpersonal and textual) metafunctions". This development, as formulated in Halliday's widely-read 1967-68 "Notes on Transitivity and Theme in English" and in his 1970 "Language Structure and Language Function", was substantially further developed in the various versions of his "Introduction to Functional Grammar" and in Halliday and Matthiessen 1999 for ideational meaning. The entire model is labelled "multifunctional", because the functional structure of language is conceived along 3 major dimensions, or functional components: ideational, interpersonal and textual. These dimensions cover what in other linguistic theories would be accounted for as logico-semantic, interactive and information structural dimensions, to use somewhat theory-neutral terms. The basic assumption of a multifunctional analysis is thus shared with other functional linguistic schools, the particular combination of functions and their systematic relationship to other linguistic levels including context may be specific to Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The levels/ strata of language (Phonetics, Phonology, Lexicogrammar, Semantics, Context) are related through a scale of "abstraction".

Other scales of abstraction (rank, delicacy and exponence) are methodological tools for relating categories within levels/ strata to each other, and all of these to their instantiations. "Rank" is similar to levels of projection in Chomskyan syntax, "delicacy" means different degrees of specification within one level, and "exponence" means instantiation from categories at each level to their instances.

Within this multifunctional approach, Halliday's work on phonology usually has a strong relationship to grammar and thus largely falls into what elsewhere would be called "information structure". Although there are some more strictly phonological works on English and Chinese (cf. Collected works in Webster 2002-2017 Vols. 7 and 8), possibly his strongest influence on phonological thinking as a whole is his modelling of the interface between grammar and intonation, and here particularly in "Theme and Information Distribution", as he often called it (Halliday 1967, Halliday and Greaves 2008). His 'Notes on Transitivity and Theme in English' 1967-68, with due acknowledgement of earlier Prague School work, count among the earliest attempts in linguistics at formulating a basic framework for information structure and its interface to grammar, remaining a reference point for linguistic discussions for decades.

Halliday's comprehensive account of *Cohesion in English* (together with Hasan 1976) was, again, a milestone at its time and has remained a highly successful reference work since then. Their treatment was one of the very first of its kind, closing a serious gap in the description of English (cf. Randoph Quirk in his foreword to the book) and covering the key cohesive mechanisms of reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion for English. It is a textbook in the sense that it arose out of work by both authors in applications to language teaching and thus does not exclusively address the linguistic research community – in the light of which fact it is all the more remarkable that it has remained one of the standard works on text linguistics. In Halliday's own work, cohesion remained the non-structural (i.e. non-grammaticalized) resource of texture, alongside the grammaticalized resources of *taxis*, *theme* and *information* (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 651ff), somewhat different from the version of SFL in Martin 1992, where cohesion forms a sort of backbone for a discourse semantics.

One of the key characteristics of Halliday's work on language is the integration of *Context of Culture* and *Context of Situation* into linguistic analysis. Early programmatic formulations can be found in Halliday et al 1964, referring back to his theoretical predecessors Malinowski 1935 and Firth 1968. More specific modelling is proposed in Halliday and Hasan 1985 and

more recently in Halliday and Matthiessen 2014:31-48. The analysis of *contextual configurations* in terms of *field, tenor and mode*, classically in alignment with the metafunctions *ideational, interpersonal and textual* has become a standard in much work on context and "register". These contextual configurations are very close methodologically to the notion of *situational characteristics of registers* (Biber and Conrad 2009: 40ff), whereas Halliday's *register* (cf. below) is close to their *linguistic characteristics of register*. The alignment between contextual configurations and semantic/ lexicogrammatical metafunctions in Halliday is what Biber and Conrad postulate as the functional forces that explain why given linguistic features tend to be associated with situational characteristics. For Halliday, *context* is a key notion, and linking analyses of context with the language-internal levels of semantics and lexiocgrammar is a key methodological step in the architecture of his SFL.

The *register* itself is the linguistic (semantic, and through this ultimately lexicogrammatical, and phonological) expression associated with a given contextual configuration.[2] *Register* is thus functional variation in language, an area in which Halliday has inspired a rich tradition of investigations into linguistic varieties (scientific writing (Halliday and Martin 1993), a whole range of registers of English and occasionally other languages (e.g. Ghadessy and Halliday eds. 1988 and later, Hansen-Schirra, Neumann and Steiner 2012, Neumann 2014, Kunz et al 2017). Work on register in Halliday's tradition can be closely compared to work by Biber and associates, arguably with more elaborate linguistic modelling behind it, but less statistical refinement in some variants.

In any account of the work of Halliday, his continuously expanded *Introduction to Functional Grammar* (IFG) in several versions from 1985 to 2014 has to be given a central place: the first two editions 1985 and 1994 have Michael Halliday as a sole author, whereas the much extended versions of 2004 and 2014 give credit to Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen as a reviser. The first and second editions were intended both as an introduction to Systemic Functional Theory of Grammar, and as an introduction to the functional description of English. With edition number 3, IFG became "…more of a reference work and less of a beginner's book." (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: XIV), adding a systemic (paratactic) dimension to the dominant functional-structure account in editions 1-2, thus broadening its scope and using

[2] Note that in the variant of SFL represented in Martin 1992 etc., the context itself is stratified into *register* and *genre*

substantially more corpus material for illustrations and motivations. The increased systemic dimension has substantial input from Matthiessen (1995), which in turn is influenced by Halliday's earlier work (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: XIV). There is also a stronger link than before between contextual variables, text-types/ registers and the textual presentation of the book, and there are more extensive points of reference to non-SFL work. The organizing concepts of IFG are those of the metafunctional organization of grammar, the clause, its ranks, its complexing (taxis), cohesion and finally the link between grammar and semantics through grammatical metaphor, another important concept of Halliday's work.

From the first version 1985 onwards, IFG had a chapter on "grammatical metaphor". The term refers to what in other schools of linguistics is usually covered as the mapping of semantics and grammar onto each other (cf. Halliday and Matthiessen 1999: chapters 6 and 10ff, Goldberg 1995, Haspelmath 2003), with grammatical alternations and nominalizations provoding typical examples. Grammatical metaphor is the mapping of one semantic configuration onto different grammatical constructions. Mappings which are direct/ literal are called "congruent", other mappings being "indirect/ non-literal/metaphorical". Grammatical metaphor is thus the reverse of lexical metaphor, the latter usually understood as the use of some word in a non-default (though in some sense related) meaning (Halliday 1985: 320). In Halliday's work, grammatical metaphor is crucially related to ontogenetic, phylogenetic and logogenetic development in language use, where, broadly speaking, metaphorical variants occur later than non-metaphorical or congruent ones. It also forms a decisive link between (clause-)semantics and lexicogrammmar, and it is used as a key explanatory device in relating texts and discourses along the dimensions of *density, directness and explicitness of encoding* ((Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: chapter 6 and pp.692f; Hansen-Schirra, Neumann and Steiner 2012: chapters 4 and 14 for modelling translation).

The following examples (1)-(2) from Halliday and Matthiessen 1999: 229 illustrate grammatical metaphor and the key properties just mentioned:

(1) The cast's brilliant acting drew lengthy applause from the audience.

(2) The cast acted brilliantly, so the audience applauded for a long time.

Of these examples, (1) is *metaphoric*, (2) is *congruent*. (1) is *denser* than (2) by mapping the (approximately same) ideational meaning onto fewer grammatical constituents of higher ranks. (1) is *less direct* than (2) by mapping logico-semantic

meaning onto a verb phrase (*drew)*, processes onto nouns (*acting)*, and circumstantial meaning (*lengthy*) onto adjectives, and their phrases, respectively. (1) is, finally, less explicit than (2) because of fewer encodings of time, aspect, mood and its indirect encoding of causation.

Halliday's more general views on language and human consciousness are represented in Volume 3 of his collected works thus reflecting his engagement with discourse across disciplinary boundaries. One of the most comprehensive formulations can be found in his 1995 'On Language in Relation to the Evolution of Human Consciousness', where he considers the specifically human aspects of the brain, aligning his views with those of bio-chemist and neuro-scientist Gerald Edelman's theory of "neural Darwinism", and with work by the socio-linguist Basil Bernstein, the linguist John Ellis, the physicist and educationist Jay Lemke and computer scientist Michio Sugeno ("fuzzy computing") in a strong anti-mentalist statement. He develops global views on language as a fourth-order (semiotic) system in the sense of general systems theory: observable systems in a bottom-up perspective include physical, biological, social and semiotic systems, with language belonging into the fourth type (Halliday 2003:2). This general view also underlies the comprehensive model of "experiential and logical meaning" published in Halliday and Matthiessen 1999 *Construing Experience Through Meaning. A Language-based Approach to Cognition*, a substantial work intended as a contribution towards creating a bridge between SFL and Cognitive Linguistics, which, however, was not as widely discussed outside the SFL community as it would have deserved it.

We have attempted in section 1.2. a review of some key concepts developed by Halliday for understanding language, and of the methodological principles for relating these concepts to each other and to their instantiations, the data. In a global perspective, Halliday's approach is *systemic* in that it gives priority to the system (paradigm) rather than the structure (syntagm) of linguistic units. Technically, this prioritizes (phonological, grammatical, semantic, contextual) features over the units / structures in which they get realized, not unlike in unification-based frameworks such as *Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammars* of the 1980s and 90s (Pollard and Sag. 1987) or *Sign-based Construction Grammars* of later years (Boas

and Sag 2012). SFL-modelling is usually less formalized, however, than the approaches mentioned here for comparison, especially as far as notions of "structure" are concerned. Halliday's approach is *functional,* not unlike other functional approaches to language (cf. Butler 2003), in that it assumes several layers of abstract (grammatical, semantic, contextual) functions language-internally, and in that it subscribes to the belief that these abstract functions are the historical products of the functions language use has in a socio-culture. The section below will highlight some important contexts of application, out of which Halliday's concepts and methods arose, illustrating them with further influential pieces of work.

1.3 Theory and application

Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics is built on the principle that theoretical development should be grounded in and motivated by questions and problems arising in its socio-cultural environment. This grounding and motivation must not be misunderstood as deterministic constraints: methods and solutions arising out of theoretical development will frequently be partial or insufficient, or they may transcend questions and problems originally motivating it. This entails a sort of "dialectic" between openness of theoretical development on the one hand, and Halliday's view that linguistic theory should be "appliable" and be driven by theoretically significant guiding applications on the other. "There were four main strands in my own personal background whereby language came to stand out in focus of attention: literature, foreign language learning and teaching, machine translation, and the broad issue of undervalued languages and varieties." (Halliday 2010:128). Halliday viewed the relationship between theory and application as a dialectical one: for him application was blind without theoretical foundation, just as theoretical development was sterile and in danger of losing focus without relevant application.

Among the most obvious, immediate applications of linguistics are descriptions of languages. In Halliday's case, this initially meant descriptions of classical Mandarin Chinese (1959), but also modern Chinese grammar, phonology and discourse phenomena. In subsequent phases of his work, he published numerous descriptions of areas of English grammar, and very prominently his initially textbook-like *Introduction to Functional Grammar* (1985), which has since grown to a very detailed and theoretically-guided comprehensive description of

English (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). We have already mentioned his work on the multifunctional structure of the English clause (1966-1968), one of the first attempts of its kind, but he also produced work on word order, intonation and lexis. In his descriptive work, he developed his analytical methodology from the early scale-and-category-model to the later multi-stratal and multifunctional model that we see in his writings already from the late 60s onwards.

Another source of theoretical development for him was the analysis of (literary and everyday) texts, for example in his "Linguistic Function and Literary Style: An Inquiry into the Language of William Golding's *The Inheritors"*, in which he attempted to show in which sense linguistic patterns can be significant for poetry or prose. Yet linguistic analyses are relevant for discourse analysis in general, as he showed in his 1992 "Some lexicogrammatical features of the *Zero Population Growth Text*". Of particular relevance also was translation: apart from an early involvement in machine translation, Halliday used human translation as a context for modelling relationships between texts, such as "equivalence and variation", but also for modelling the evaluation of texts. Halliday et al 1964 (I,5) already modelled translation within the then established "Systemic Linguistics", and Halliday returned to models of translation and of translation evaluation in some of his later writings (cf. Halliday 2001, 2009, 2012). These text analyses had considerable influence in the communities of literary scholars, discourse analysts and translators, but in their reflections back onto developments of theory and method, they were important for focusing on certain areas of the linguistic system, and of taking textual phenomena, such as frequencies and proportionalities of constructions, into account.

And then there was the important area of language teaching providing a context of development for his theory, both as first- and second language teaching. His highly significant contributions to *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching* (1964) have been a major point of reference for language teachers and translators, but also a major early source for the development of the SFL-key concept of "register", so influential in relating language variation to contexts of use. His 1990 paper *Literacy and Linguistics: A Functional Perspective*, published in a revised version in Vol. 9 of his collected works (2007), shows his influential attempt at addressing key concepts of education from a functional linguistic perspective, an attempt which was highly influential in the English-speaking world and engaged with the different media (spoken-written, other semiotic systems) and ideologies of education. And again, this area of application was instrumental not only outwards towards

educational contexts, but also inwards towards developing aspects of the overall SFL-model towards different modes of discourse into areas such as multimodality.

Related to this area, there is, of course, language development in ontogenesis: Halliday's 1975 *Learning how to mean* was an influential work at its time, encompassing intonation, lexicogrammar and semantics. It was also one of the counter-positions to the then dominant nativist perspective arising out of the tradition of Chomsky and Generative Grammar, hence also the preference for the term "language development" over the nativist "language acquisition". It represented one of the most detailed case studies of one individual child over the period of 9 – 30 months, thus covering an earlier onset period than had been usual until then. This work provided analyses charting ontogenesis in an all-encompassing perspective ranging from phonetics and intonation through lexicogrammar and discourse, thus providing an impetus to a host of similar studies by other researchers.

Halliday's SFL has also engaged in some areas of computational linguistics (cf. O'Donnell 2017). These areas marginally included parsing but, more strongly, text generation in the 1980s, even if the influence mainly came through SFL-researchers other than Halliday himself. What Halliday himself engaged in was machine translation and the lexicon (early in the 1950s), text generation in the 1980s, corpus linguistics, quantitative studies and meaning-based computing in the 1990s. Halliday's own contributions in this area are brought together in Vol. 6 of his collected works, rightfully titled "Quantitative Studies". I believe that Halliday's own main interest in computation had to do with his deep-seated belief that linguistic systems and their instantiation are related through feedback loops through interactions of which the system emerges out of dynamic and cumulative frequencies in the instance i.e. texts (not unlike the approaches represented in Bybee and Hopper eds. 2001 or in Tomasello 2003). In this sense, his view was closer to current data-driven empirical linguistics than to strictly top-down symbol-processing approaches. However, his was a strong belief that human language processing happens at a symbolic level, hence his "Functional Grammar" which is arguably at the core of his work and which represents a strong commitment to seeing language as a semiotic system of signs. Emergence and change in this system are happening in interaction with frequencies in the instance.

2. Halliday's contributions

I have focused here on Halliday's own work, exceptionally well documented in Webster (ed. 2002-2017), leaving aside work inspired by him all around the world. Representative overviews on work in SFL are available in Hasan, Matthiessen and Webster. eds. 2005, 2007, in Webster ed. 2015, in Bartlett and O'Grady. eds. 2017 and in Bowcher, Fontaine and Yameng Laing. eds. forthcoming, to name just a few collective volumes. The world-wide International Systemic Functional Linguistics Association (http://www.isfla.org/) provides an international forum for cooperation in the form of annual conferences, and there are a number of regional and/ or national associations in addition. There is the Halliday-Hasan International Fund in China organizing various activities around SFL, and there is the Halliday Centre for Intelligent Applications of Language Studies (http://hallidaycentre.cityu.edu.hk/index.aspx) in Hong Kong, which has been a center for research and teaching along the Systemic Functional Linguistics developed by Halliday.

I have tried to show in 1.2 that Halliday at various stages in his linguistic work has made original and long-standing contributions to our knowledge of language and to methods for researching it. He has done so across phenomena as diverse as the relationship between phonology and grammar, transitivity and participant roles, cohesion and texture, the language-context interface, register and linguistic variation. In 1.3. an attempt was made to exemplify the deep and creative impact which Halliday's linguistics has had on areas ranging from the analysis of literature, through (foreign) language learning and teaching, (machine- and human) translation, to the analysis of variation in language. In all of these respects, Halliday has left significant traces which will continue to lead others on to further development in theory and practice.

Yet to all of those who were fortunate enough to encounter him in person, Michael Halliday left more, and something different, than exclusively insights into language: He was an impressive personality with his full and active life of 93 years, most of which he was able to enjoy fully active both in his beloved linguistics and in other activities he enjoyed, such as hiking and sharing time with friends. The passing away of his beloved wife and colleague Ruqaiya Hasan in 2015 was a loss which he never fully recovered from. Michael Halliday's initial fascinations in life were, according to his own testimony, language and China. He was able to pursue these in the fullest sense imaginable: He spent a decisive period in revolutionary China1947-1950, one of the major turning points and critical periods of world history in the 20th century. Through his mastery of Chinese, he was able to experience these decisive moments like very few other Westerners, and he preserved a deep interest in and a

critical solidarity for China for the entire rest of his life, spending many shorter and longer periods in various parts of the country. As for his fascination with language, he was able to pursue it both through his competence in a range of languages, and through the model of language which he developed and which has motivated a great number of fellow linguists around the globe towards intensive and creative work. In spite – or maybe because of - this extraordinary personality, Michael Halliday was incredibly friendly, modest and supportive – a gentle man. He lived openness rather than personal distance, modesty rather than vanity, solidarity rather than competition – and he left a painful gap, not only in linguistics, but also in the lives and memories of those who knew him.

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