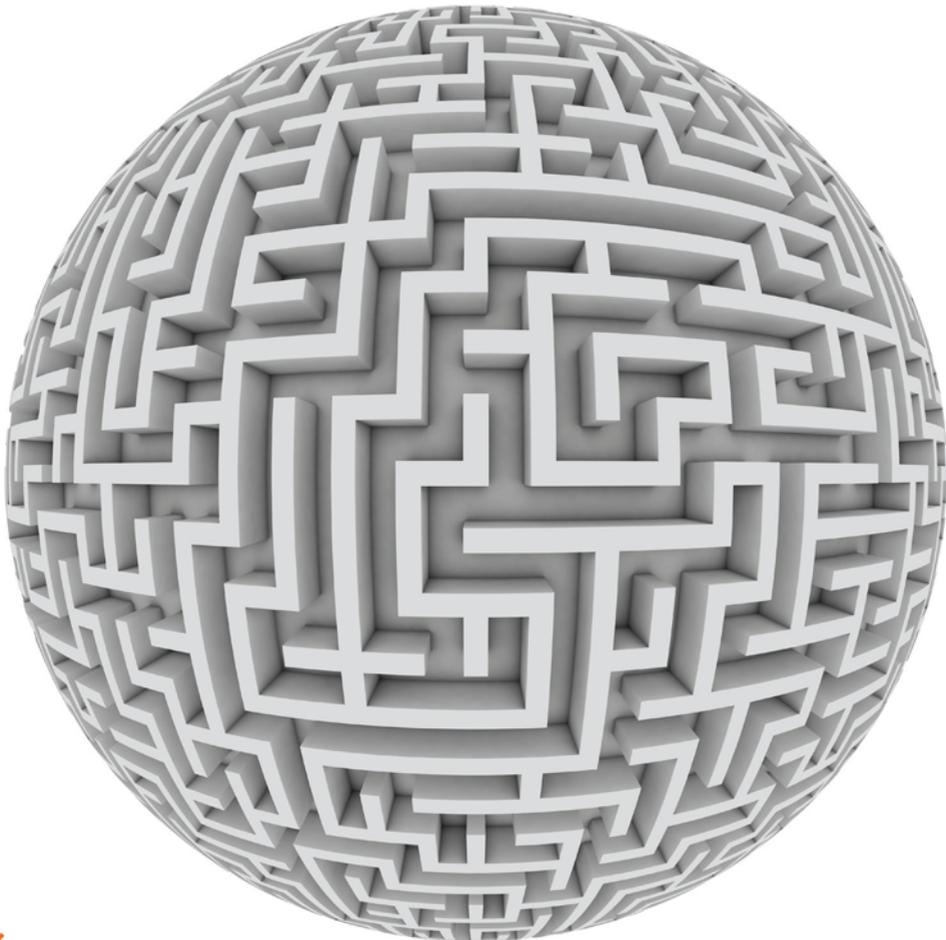


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**FUNCTIONAL
GRAMMAR**

M.A.K. Halliday

Revised by Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen



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M.A.K. Halliday is Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at the University of Sydney, Australia.

Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen is Chair Professor of the Department of English in the Faculty of Humanities at Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

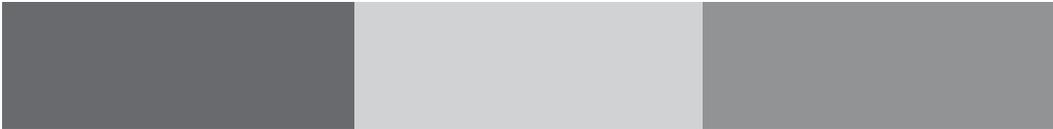
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INTRODUCTION
TO FUNCTIONAL
GRAMMAR

F O U R T H E D I T I O N

M.A.K. Halliday

Revised by Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen

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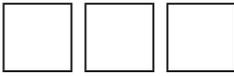
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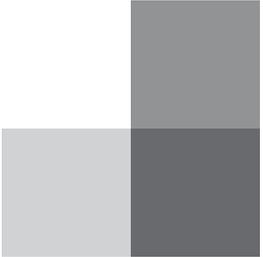
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CONVENTIONS



Systemic description

Capitalization labels used in systems and realization statements

Capitalization	Convention	Example
lower case, or lower case with single quotes	name of term in system (feature, option)	'indicative'/'imperative'
small capitals	name of name of system	MOOD, MOOD TYPE, SUBJECT PERSON
initial capital	name of structural function (element)	Mood, Subject; Theme, Rheme

Operators in system specifications

Operator	Symbol	Example
entry condition leading to terms in system	:	indicative : declarative/interrogative
systemic contrast (disjunction)	/	declarative/interrogative; declarative/imperative: tagged/untagged
systemic combination (conjunction)	&	intensive & identifying: assigned/non-assigned

Operators in realization statements

Operator	Symbol	Example
insert	+	indicative ↘ + Finite
order	^	declarative ↘ Subject ^ Finite
expand	()	indicative ↘ Mood (Finite, Subject)
preselect	:	mental ↘ Senser: conscious



CONVENTIONS

Graphic conventions in system networks

- $a \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \end{bmatrix}$ there is a system x/y with entry condition a [if a , then either x or y]
- $a \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \end{bmatrix} \\ \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} m \\ n \end{bmatrix} \end{array} \right.$ there are two simultaneous systems x/y and m/n , both having entry condition a [if a , then both either x or y and, independently, either m or n]
- $a \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} x \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} m \\ n \end{bmatrix} \\ y \end{bmatrix}$ there are two systems x/y and m/n , ordered in dependence such that m/n has entry condition x and x/y has entry condition a [if a then either x or y , and if x , then either m or n]
- $\left. \begin{array}{l} a \\ b \end{array} \right\} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \end{bmatrix}$ there is a system x/y with compound entry condition, conjunction of a and b [if both a and b , then either x or y]
- $\left. \begin{array}{l} a \\ c \end{array} \right\} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} m \\ n \end{bmatrix}$ there is a system m/n with two possible entry conditions, disjunction of a and c [if either a or c , or both, then either m or n]

Annotation of text

Boundary markers

Stratum	Symbol	Unit (complex)	Example
lexicogrammar		clause complex	
		clause	
		phrase, group	
	[[[]]]	rankshifted (embedded) clause complex	
	[[]]	rankshifted (embedded) clause	
	[]	rankshifted (embedded) phrase, group	
phonology	///	tone group complex	
	//	tone group	
	/	foot	
	^	silent beat	

Other forms of annotation

Symbol	Gloss	Example
†	Constructed example	† John's father wanted him to give up the violin. His teacher persuaded him to continue.
*	Overlapping turns, starting at the location of the asterisk	Jane: We were all exactly * the same. Kate: * But I don't know that we were friends.
[ø: 'x]	element of structure ellipsed, reinstatable as 'x'	You've lost credibility and also you've probably spent more than you wanted to, so [ø: ' you '] do be willing to back away from it, because there's always something else next week or the month after.

Example sources

Sources of examples are given in square brackets after examples. The main types are listed in the table below.

Type of reference		Comment	Example
[number]		Example taken from our archive of examples held in a database; these will be listed on the IFG companion website	[Text 370]
[corpus name]	[ICE]	Example take from one of the corpora in the collection known as International Corpus of English (ICE)	[ICE-India]
	[ACE]	Example take from the Australian Corpus of English (ACE)	
	[LOB]	Example take from the Lancaster-Oslo-Bergen Corpus of British English	
	[BROWN]	Example take from the BROWN Corpus of American English	
	[COCA]	Example take from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)	
	[BE]	Bank of English corpus	

Other conventions

Bold font is used to indicate (first mention of) technical terms, as in:

Each foot, in turn, is made up of a number of **syllables**

Italic font is used to indicate grammatical and lexical items and examples cited in the body of the text, as in:

Here, the Theme *this responsibility* is strongly foregrounded

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INTRODUCTION



The first edition of *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar* (IFG) appeared in 1985. It was, among other things, an introduction to the systemic functional **theory** of grammar that M.A.K. Halliday initiated through the publication of his 1961 article 'Categories of the theory of grammar' (although his publications on the grammar of Chinese go back to 1956). It was at the same time an introduction to the **description** of the grammar of English that he had started in the early 1960s (see e.g. Halliday, 1964). Thus, the first edition of IFG was an introduction both to a functional theory of the grammar of human language in general and to a description of the grammar of a particular language, English, based on this theory. The relationship between theory and description was a dialogic one: the theory was illustrated through the description of English, and the description of English was empowered by the theory. Halliday could have used any other language for this purpose rather than English – for example, Chinese, since he had worked on Chinese since the late 1940s. The theory had been developed as a theory of grammar in general, and by the mid-1980s it had already been deployed and tested in the description of a number of languages.

Around half a century has passed since Halliday's first work on the general theory of grammar and his first work on the description of English, and around a quarter of a century has passed since IFG1 appeared: that edition represents the mid-point between the early work and today's continued theoretical and descriptive research activities, activities that were enabled by IFG1 and are reflected in IFG4. When IFG1 appeared, it was the only introduction of its kind, a summary of the work by Halliday and others undertaken since the early 1960s. It was a 'thumbnail sketch'. He had already published accounts of various areas, accounts that were in many respects more detailed than the sketches in IFG – e.g. his account of transitivity and theme (Halliday, 1967/8), his interpretation of modality (Halliday, 1970) and his description of grammar and intonation (Halliday, 1967a). He had also worked on a manuscript

presenting a comprehensive account of the grammar of English, *The meaning of modern English*; many aspects of this account such as his interpretation of tense in English were only sketched in IFG1. In addition, researchers had contributed significant text-based studies of grammar and of intonation based on his framework. These informed the description of English, but have not been published since text-based accounts were not welcomed by publishers in the period dominated by formal generative linguistics.

Since IFG1 appeared a quarter of a century ago, and IFG2 followed nine years later in 1994, systemic functional linguists have published other complementary volumes drawing on IFG in different ways, designed to serve different communities of users; these include Geoff Thompson's *Introducing functional grammar* (first edition in 1996; second in 2004, with the third about to appear), Meriel and Thomas Bloor's *Functional analysis of English: a Hallidayan approach* (first edition in 1995; second in 2004), my own *Lexicogrammatical cartography: English systems* (1995), Graham Lock's *Functional English grammar: An introduction for second language teachers* (1996), and the IFG workbook by Clare Painter, J.R. Martin and myself (first edition: *Working with functional grammar*, 1998; second edition: *Deploying functional grammar*, 2010). In addition, researchers have contributed many journal articles and book chapters to thematic volumes dealing with particular aspects of IFG or reporting on research based on the IFG framework. For a summary of the rich work in the IFG framework, see Matthiessen (2007b). However, researchers have also complemented IFG stratally, moving from the account of lexicogrammar presented in IFG to the stratum of semantics; book-length accounts include Martin's *English text* (1992) and Halliday's and my *Construing experience* (1999, republished in 2006).

By the time Halliday generously invited me to take part in the project of producing IFG3, the ecological niche in which IFG operates had thus changed considerably – certainly for the better. It had, in a sense, become more crowded; but this meant that IFG3 could develop in new ways. Thanks to Geoff Thompson's more introductory *Introducing functional grammar* and to other contributions of this kind, we were able to extend IFG in significant ways, perhaps making the third edition more of a reference work and less of a beginner's book than the previous two editions had been. We certainly included features of the grammar of English that had not been covered before, and we provided a more comprehensive sketch of the overall theoretical framework in Chapters 1 and 2. In preparing the third edition, we worked extensively with corpora of different kinds – resources that had become more accessible since IFG1, supported by computational tools that had been developed since that edition; and we included many examples drawn from corpora, and from our own archives of text. In addition, we included system networks for all the major areas of the grammar.

In my own *Lexicogrammatical cartography: English system* (1995), LexCart, I had used system networks as a cartographic tool, organizing the presentation of the description of the grammar in terms of the system networks – ranging across metafunctions and down ranks and taking a number of steps in delicacy. These system networks were derived from a system network of the clause that Halliday had put together for a computational project initiated by Nick Colby at UC Irvine and then taken over as the seed of the Nigel grammar as part of the Penman project directed by Bill Mann at the Information Sciences Institute, USC, in 1980 (this system network has now been published as part of Halliday's collected works). As a research linguist working on Mann's project since the beginning, I expanded this clause network, and added networks for other parts of the grammar – with

the help of Halliday and other systemic functional linguists (see Matthiessen, 1995a, and cf. Matthiessen, 2007b). When we added system networks to IFG3, we did not try to organize the overall presentation in terms of them as I had done in LexCart, since IFG already had its own logic of presentation, which included more reasoning about the development of the account than I had included in LexCart.

In preparing IFG4, I have followed the trajectory from IFG1 to IFG3, while at the same time keeping in mind changes in the environment in which this fourth edition will appear. I have continued working with corpora, benefiting from new resources generously made available to the research community such as COCA (see Chapter 2). A great deal of this work is, quite naturally, ‘under the hood’: as with IFG3, many fishing expeditions are reflected by only one or two examples, or by just a brief note in passing, and many other expeditions are only reflected indirectly. Along the way, there have been various interesting findings that there is no space to report on in IFG4, like changes in the use of ‘gush’ as a verb in *Time Magazine* since the 1920s, or more generally in the use of verbs of saying over that period. In working with corpora, I was at various points tempted to replace all examples from older corpora dating back to the 1960s with examples from more recent ones; but I decided against it for various reasons – an important one being that, like any other language, English is an assemblage of varieties of different kinds (cf. Chapter 2, Section 2.4), including temporal dialects: the collective system of a language typically spans a few generations – never in a state of being, always in a process of becoming. And even more than a few generations: while Chaucer is almost out of range, Shakespeare is not.

One new feature in IFG4 is the introduction of a scheme for classifying texts according to contextual variables, presented in Chapter 1. In Chapter 2 through to Chapter 10, I have classified all the short texts and text extracts according to this scheme. This is a step in the direction of illuminating the grammar at work in different text types – of supporting the understanding of a language as an assemblage of registers. We hope that the website companion to IFG4 (see below) will make it possible to provide many more text examples.

Another feature of IFG4 is the continued expansion of references to theoretical frameworks and to descriptive work on English in systemic functional linguistics but also in other frameworks. Here it is, of course, impossible to be comprehensive, or even to achieve a balanced representation of references to relevant contributions. In his preface to Volume 1 of his *Basic linguistic theory*, Dixon refers to ‘quotationitis’, introducing it as ‘a fashion in linguistics’, and characterizing it as ‘attempting to cite every single thing published on or around a topic, irrespective of its quality or direct relevance’, and then pointing to problems with this ‘fashion’. At the same time, it is very important that readers of IFG should be able to follow up on particular points mentioned in the book and go beyond the material presented here; and these days scholars are increasingly subjected by governments to ill-conceived and destructive frameworks designed to measure their output and impact in terms of publications, so citations make a difference. At one point, I thought that the solution in the area of description might be to cite central passages in the major reference grammars of English. However, on the one hand, this would actually be a significant project in its own right, and on the other hand, these reference grammars are not, on the whole, designed as gateways to the literature. I hope that the website companion to IFG4 will be able to provide more bibliographic information. And various online search facilities are helping students and researchers find relevant references.

IFG4 can be used as a reference work supporting more introductory accounts, or as a textbook in its own right. In either case, there are a number of books that are an important part of the environment in which IFG operates – theoretical and descriptive accounts of grammar (e.g. Halliday, 2002b, 2005; Butt *et al.*, 2000; Thompson, 2004; Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Eggins, 2004; Matthiessen, 1995a; Martin, Matthiessen & Painter, 2010; Matthiessen & Halliday, 2009; Caffarel, Martin & Matthiessen, 2004), of (prosodic) phonology (e.g. Halliday & Greaves, 2008) and of semantics (e.g. Martin, 1992; Eggins & Slade, 2005; Martin & Rose, 2007; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2006). Accounts of language development both in the home and the neighbourhood before school (e.g. Halliday, 1975, 2004; Painter, 1984, 1999) and in school (see Christie & Derewianka, 2008, for a recent summary of research and report on their own research from early primary school to late secondary school in Australia) give a unique insight into the ontogenetic beginnings and continual expansion of lexicogrammar, and also a very rich understanding of the grammar at work in everyday and educational contexts. Recent overviews of systemic functional linguistics include Hasan, Matthiessen & Webster (2005, 2007), Halliday & Webster (2009); and, through the window of terminology, Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam (2010). Here it is very important to note that Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is only one part of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). If one is working on English, it is, of course, always helpful to have the standard reference grammars of English within easy reach – Quirk *et al.* (1985), Biber *et al.* (1999) and Huddleston & Pullum (2002), as well as overviews of descriptions of English such as Aarts & McMahon (2006).

In addition, IFG4 will be supported by a dedicated website. At the time of writing, I am still working on material for the website, but it is clear that the site will offer additional examples, extended text illustrations, sources of examples cited, additional pointers to the literature, colour versions of a number of figures in IFG4 and probably additional displays, the appendices from the first two editions of IFG and the foreword, and, I hope, in-depth discussions of certain topics. I also hope that it will, at least to some extent, be possible to take account of alternative descriptions, both systemic functional ones based on the framework of the ‘Cardiff grammar’, developed by Robin Fawcett, Gordon Tucker and their team of colleagues, researchers and students, and functional ones from other traditions, as well as formal ones where there are interesting convergences or illuminating differences. I hope the website will make it possible to treat IFG4 as a ‘live document’.

Let me round off this introduction on a personal note. When I saw the first drafts of parts of IFG1 around 1980 or 1981, I was working as a research linguist on a computational linguistic text-generation project directed by Bill Mann (cf. Matthiessen & Bateman, 1991; Matthiessen, 2005). Halliday was a consultant on the project and had (as mentioned above) already contributed an ‘algebraic’ representation of the core systems of the clause as a foundation of the computational grammar part of the text generation system, the ‘Nigel grammar’, and with the help of the first drafts and earlier published system networks, I expanded the description for the computational grammar. Halliday and I had both started on the project in mid-1980. In the course of this project and its successors, I was very fortunate to learn from him how to develop grammatical descriptions – holistically, as global outlines rather than as local grammar fragments; and I learned how to model grammar and how to produce descriptions that are explicit enough for computational modelling.

However, my interest in Halliday’s work and in systemic functional linguistics more generally had started during my undergraduate days in general linguistics and English linguistics at Lund

University in the 1970s. As an undergraduate student in linguistics, I was taught to develop descriptions of fragments of grammar using the version of Chomsky's generative grammar that was current at the time (a version of the 'Extended Standard Theory'); I remember working on mood tags – without any of the insights that Halliday's account brings to this area of the grammar of English. But we were also encouraged to explore different theoretical frameworks, by the two professors of Linguistics during my time there as a student, Bertil Malmberg and then Bengt Sigurd. And in the Department of English, where I was also a student, there was a great deal of interest in Halliday & Hasan's (1976) account of cohesion – a contribution that stimulated a number of PhD theses in that department, as part of the reorientation to corpus-based research brought about by the new Professor of English linguistics, Jan Svartvik. (In those days, it was still possible for students to construct their own study paths; I had added Arabic and Philosophy to my particular mix.)

When I first came across Systemic Functional Linguistics back at Lund University, something clicked – or rather a number of things clicked. I realized that Halliday had solved a problem that had puzzled and bothered me for quite a long time – since secondary school, where I had come across Alvar Ellegård's highly original introduction to generative semantics and also Bertil Malmberg's introduction to European structuralism. Both approaches seemed full of insight and promising – one providing a deeper understanding of structure and the other showing the power of the paradigmatic axis. However, they appeared to be completely incompatible. It was only when I read Halliday's work that I understood how systemic (paradigmatic) organization could be related to structural (syntagmatic) organization through realization statements. His theory of paradigmatic organization and the relationship between the paradigmatic axis and the syntagmatic one is one of the major breakthroughs in twentieth-century theoretical linguistics. Later I became aware of other breakthroughs he had quietly made, including his theory of metafunctions, his theory of instantiation and his theory of grammatical metaphor.

In working on the description of English in a computational linguistics context, and on the description of Akan in a typological linguistic context, I also came to appreciate the descriptive power of systemic functional theory, including the heuristic value of developing a description with the help of a function-rank matrix (see Chapter 2). I still remember very clearly the quite extraordinary sensation I had when I began auditing the first seminars I had ever attended by Halliday – a course he gave at UC Irvine starting around March 1980: this was the first time anyone had ever given me a clear sense of the overall organization of language as a complex semiotic system. I thought to myself that he was the first linguist to teach me about language; previously other linguists had taught me about linguistics. There is a very significant fundamental difference between the two; and language is much harder to understand (and so to teach about) than linguistics!

I was very fortunate to start working on the systemic functional description of English in 1980 under Halliday's guidance. His descriptions were often quite 'unorthodox' in the sense that they differed significantly from 'mainstream' accounts — for example, his account of the clause as a metafunctional grammatical construct, his account of grammar and lexis as zones within a lexicogrammatical continuum (rather than as separate 'modules'), his account of transitivity in English based on the complementarity of the transitive and ergative models, his account of theme and information as complementary textual systems, his account of modality as a cline for propositions and proposal between positive and negative polarity

extended through interpersonal grammatical metaphor, his account of tense as a logical system for construing serial time (as opposed to a combination of tense and aspect), his account of hypotactic verbal group complexes and of clause complexes (contrasting with accounts based on the notion of complementation).

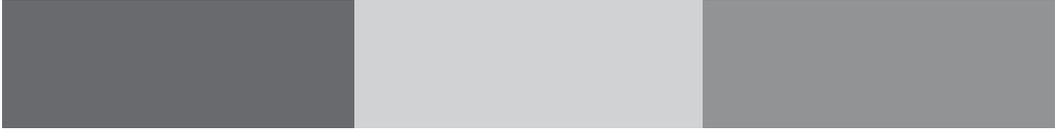
Naturally, in working on the computational grammar in the 1980s, I tried out more fashionable accounts that were part of the received tradition; but every time I experimented I came to realize how much more insightful Halliday's accounts were – being part of (and thus revealing patterns within) the overall system of the grammar. He never tried to convince me – never tried to pull rank (although in his position, I would've been very tempted to tell me: 'just take my word for it'), but, instead, he taught me how to work things out for myself.

One of the early areas I worked on was tense; when I finally understood his account, and was able to appreciate the advance it represented over both tense-aspect accounts that were popular at the time and Hans Reichenbach's sketch of a temporal logic from the 1940s that had been adopted in a number of more recent linguistic and computational linguistic accounts, I experienced the sense of an *Aha-Erlebnis* for the first time in my life – the term had been introduced to us in high school (I probably learned the term 'epiphany' much later), but I think I had only understood it theoretically before: I suddenly understood the deep insight embodied in Halliday's description of the English grammar of serial time.

On another occasion I was trying to come to grips with 'serial verb constructions' in Akan in the mid-1980s and I suddenly realized that Halliday's account of hypotactic verbal group complexes was a much better model than the assumption (still common at the time) that some form of complementation was involved. But I've already gone on too long ... I just wanted to convey both my sense of the extraordinary intellectual excitement of being involved in the long-term research programme of which IFG has turned out to be an important part and my enormous sense of gratitude to Halliday for his mentorship, and also for his fortitude – for daring to be so dramatically different from the mainstream even at the cost of being ignored and effaced by its practitioners and for daring to develop applicable linguistics at a time when application was a sign of theoretical impurity.

As I tinker with Michael Halliday's *Introduction to functional grammar*, I am yet again reminded of my enormous debt to him — a debt that I am very happy to see increase over the decades; it will continue to accumulate interest for as long as I live. At the same time, I'm also happily aware of all the colleagues and students who have engaged with IFG, asking questions and giving comments that have informed my work on the fourth edition. I am deeply grateful to all of them. It's impossible to mention everyone; but I have benefited in particular from the researchers who have done PhDs with me developing comprehensive descriptions of the clause grammars of a rich range of languages: Alice Caffarel on French, Kazuhiro Teruya on Japanese, Minh Duc Thai on Vietnamese, Eden Li on Chinese, Pattama Patpong on Thai, Ernest Akerejola on Òkó, Abhishek Kumar on Bajjika and Mohamed Ali Bardi on Arabic.

Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen
 The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
 Hong Kong



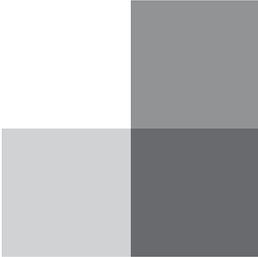
PART I
THE CLAUSE

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CHAPTER ONE

THE ARCHITECTURE OF LANGUAGE



1.1 Text and grammar

When people speak or write, they produce **text**; and text is what listeners and readers engage with and interpret. The term ‘text’ refers to any instance of language, in any medium, that makes sense to someone who knows the language; we can characterize text as language functioning in context (cf. Halliday & Hasan, 1976: Ch. 1; Halliday, 2010). Language is, in the first instance, a resource for making meaning; so text is a process of making meaning in context.

To a grammarian, text is a rich, many-faceted phenomenon that ‘means’ in many different ways. It can be explored from many different points of view. But we can distinguish two main angles of vision: one, focus on the text as an object in its own right; two, focus on the text as an instrument for finding out about something else. Focusing on text as an object, a grammarian will be asking questions such as: Why does the text mean what it does (to me, or to anyone else)? Why is it valued as it is? Focusing on text as instrument, the grammarian will be asking what the text reveals about the system of the language in which it is spoken or written. These two perspectives are clearly complementary: we cannot explain why a text means what it does, with all the various readings and values that may be given to it, except by relating it to the linguistic system as a whole; and, equally, we cannot use it as a window on the system unless we understand what it means and why. But the text has a different status in each case: either viewed as **artefact**, or else viewed as **specimen**.

The text itself may be lasting or ephemeral, momentous or trivial, memorable or soon forgotten. Here are three examples of text in English:

Text 1-1: Exploring text (spoken, monologic)

Today all of us do, by our presence here, and by our celebrations in other parts of our country and the world, confer glory and hope to newborn liberty.



Out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud. Our daily deeds as ordinary South Africans must produce an actual South African reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice, strengthen its confidence in the nobility of the human soul and sustain all our hopes for a glorious life for all.

All this we owe both to ourselves and to the peoples of the world who are so well represented here today.

Text 1-2: Recommending text (written, monologic)

Cold power is the **ideal brand for any family**.

We understand that there is more than one thing you want to achieve out of every wash load.

As such, we have developed a formula capable of achieving a **wide range of benefits** for all types of wash loads.

Text 1-3: Sharing text (spoken, dialogic)

'And we've been trying different places around the island that – em, a couple of years ago we got on to this place called the Surai in East Bali and we just go back there now every time. It is –'

'Oh I've heard about this.'

'Have you heard about it? Oh.'

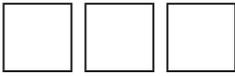
'Friends have been there.'

'It is the most wonderful wonderful place. Fabulous.'

Text (1-3) was a spontaneous spoken text that we are able to transpose into writing because it was recorded on audiotape. Text (1-2) is a written text, which we could (if we wanted to) read aloud. Text (1-1) is more complex: it was probably composed in writing, perhaps with some spoken rehearsal; but it was written in order to be spoken, and to be spoken on an all-important public occasion (Nelson Mandela's inaugural speech as President, 10 May 1994).

When grammarians say that from their point of view all texts are equal, they are thinking of them as specimens. If we are interested in explaining the grammar of English, all these three texts illustrate numerous grammatical features of the language, in meaningful functional contexts, all equally needing to be taken into account. Seen as artefacts, on the other hand, these texts are far from equal. Text (1-1) constituted an important moment in modern human history, and may have left its imprint on the language in a way that only a very few highly valued texts are destined to do. But here too there is a complementarity. Text (1-1) has value because we also understand texts like (1-2) and (1-3); not that we compare them, of course, but that each text gets its meaning by selecting from the same meaning-making resources. What distinguishes any one text is the way these resources are deployed.

Our aim in this book has been to describe and explain the meaning-making resources of modern English, going as far in detail as is possible within one medium-size volume. In deciding what parts of the grammar to cover, and how far to go in discussion of theory, we have had in mind those who want to use their understanding of grammar in analysing and interpreting texts. This in turn means recognizing that the contexts for analysis of discourse are numerous and varied – educational, social, literary, political, legal, clinical and so on; and in all these the text may be being analysed as specimen or as artefact, or both (specimen here might mean specimen of a particular functional variety, or **register**, such as 'legal English'). What is common to all these pursuits is that they should be grounded in an



account of the grammar that is coherent, comprehensive, and richly dimensioned. To say this is no more than to suggest that the **grammatics** – the model of grammar – should be as rich as the grammar itself (Halliday, 1984b, 1996; for educational considerations, cf. also Williams, 2005). If the account seems complex, this is because the grammar is complex – it has to be, to do all the things we make it do for us. It does no service to anyone in the long run if we pretend that **semiosis** – the making and understanding of meaning – is a simpler matter than it really is.¹

1.1.1 Constituency: (1) phonological

Perhaps the most noticeable dimension of language is its **compositional** structure, known as ‘constituency’: larger units of language consist of smaller ones. The patterns of any sub-system of language such as the sub-system of sounding, or **phonology**, are distributed across units of varying size, ranging from the largest units of that sub-system to the smallest. Units of different sizes carry different kinds of pattern; for example, in phonology, the largest units carry melodic patterns, and the smallest units carry articulatory patterns.

If we listen to any of these texts – to any text, in fact – in its spoken form we will hear continuous melody with rising and falling pitch, and with certain moments of prominence marked by either relatively rapid pitch changes or extended pitch intervals (cf. Halliday & Greaves, 2008). These moments of prominence define a snatch of melody – a melodic unit, or **line**; and within this melodic progression we will be able to pick up a more or less regular beat, defining some rhythmic unit, or **foot**. We can perhaps recognize that the ‘line’ and the ‘foot’ of our traditional verse metres are simply regularized versions of these properties of ordinary speech.

Each foot, in turn, is made up of a number of units of articulatory movement, or **syllables**; and each syllable is composed of two parts, one of which enables it to rhyme. We refer to this rhyming segment, simply, as the **rhyme**; the preceding segment to which it is attached is called the **onset**. Both onset and rhyme can be further analysed as articulatory sequences of consonants and vowels: consonant and vowel **phonemes**, in technical parlance.

The stretch of speech is continuous; we stop and pause for breath from time to time, or hesitate before an uncertain choice of word, but such pauses play no part in the overall construction. None of these units – melodic line (or ‘tone group’), foot (or ‘rhythm group’), syllable or phoneme – has clearly identifiable boundaries, some definite point in time where it begins and ends. Nevertheless, we can hear the patterns that are being created by the spoken voice. There is a form of order here that we can call **constituency**, whereby larger units are made up out of smaller ones: a line out of feet, a foot out of syllables, a syllable out of sequences of phonemes (perhaps with ‘sub-syllable’ intermediate between the two). We refer to such a hierarchy of units, related by constituency, as a **rank scale**, and to each step in the hierarchy as one **rank** (cf. Halliday, 1961, 1966c; Huddleston, 1965).

¹ Throughout this book we will show the first mention of technical terms such as ‘register’, ‘grammatics’ and “semiosis” in bold. Most scientific disciplines use technical terms quite extensively as part of the linguistic resources for construing their field of study. Technical terms are *not* unnecessary ‘jargon’; they are an essential part of construction of scientific knowledge. Many of the terms used here can be found in Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam (2010). If this introduction to functional grammar seems to have many technical terms, we recommend a comparison with a university textbook introducing, e.g., anatomy or geology!



What we have been setting up here is the rank scale for the sound system of English: the **phonological rank scale** (see Halliday, 1967a: 12ff.; Halliday & Greaves, 2008). Every language has some rank scale of phonological constituents, but with considerable variation in how the constituency is organized (cf. Halliday, 1992c, on Mandarin): in patterns of articulation (syllables, phonemes), of rhythm (feet), and of melody (tone groups), and in the way the different variables are integrated into a functioning whole. We get a good sense of the way the sounds of English are organized when we analyse children’s verses, or ‘nursery rhymes’; these have evolved in such a way as to display the patterns in their most regularized form. *Little Miss Muffet* can serve as an example (Figure 1-1).²

	foot			foot			foot			foot		
	syll.	syll.	syll.	syll.	syll.	syll.	syll.	syll.	syll.	syll.	syll.	syll.
line	<i>Lit</i>	<i>tle</i>	<i>Miss</i>	<i>Muf</i>	<i>fet</i>		<i>sat</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>tuf</i>	<i>fet</i>	
line	<i>Eat</i>	<i>ing</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>curds</i>	<i>and</i>		<i>why</i>					<i>There</i>
line	<i>came</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>big</i>	<i>spi</i>	<i>der</i>	<i>which</i>	<i>sat</i>	<i>down</i>	<i>be</i>	<i>side</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>And</i>
line	<i>frigh</i>	<i>tened</i>	<i>Miss</i>	<i>Muf</i>	<i>fet</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>way</i>					

Fig. 1-1 Example of phonological constituency

We will say more about phonology in Section 1.2 below. Meanwhile we turn to the notion of constituency in writing.

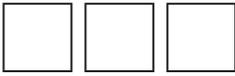
1.1.2 Constituency: (2) graphological

As writing systems evolved, they gradually came to model the constituent hierarchy of spoken language, by developing a rank scale of their own. Thus, in modern English writing, we have a graphological rank scale of four ranks: the **sentence** (beginning with a capital letter and ending with a major punctuation mark: a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark), **sub-sentence** (bounded by some intermediate punctuation mark: colon, semicolon or comma; or a dash), **word** (bounded by spaces) and **letter**. Here is the same text written in orthographic conventional form (see Figure 1-2).

		word	word	word	word	word	word	word
sentence	sub-sentence	<i>Little</i>	<i>Miss</i>	<i>Muffet</i>	<i>sat</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>tuffet,</i>
	sub-sentence	<i>eating</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>curds</i>	<i>and</i>	<i>why.</i>		
sentence	sub-sentence	<i>There</i>	<i>came</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>big</i>	<i>spider,</i>		
	sub-sentence	<i>which</i>	<i>sat</i>	<i>down</i>	<i>beside</i>	<i>her,</i>		
	sub-sentence	<i>and</i>	<i>frightened</i>	<i>Miss</i>	<i>Muffet</i>	<i>away.</i>		

Fig. 1-2 Examples of graphological constituency: sentence, sub-sentence and word

² Versions of nursery rhymes are those given in Iona & Peter Opie, *The Oxford dictionary of nursery rhymes*.



The constituent structure is represented by a combination of **spelling** (combining letters to form words) and **punctuation** (using special signs, and also the case of the letter, to signal boundaries; cf. Halliday, 1985a). The system is more complex than we have illustrated here, in three respects: (1) word boundaries are somewhat fuzzy, and there is a special punctuation mark, the hyphen, brought in to allow for the uncertainty, e.g. *frying pan*, *fryingpan*, *frying-pan*; (2) there is a further rank in the hierarchy of sub-sentences, with colon and semicolon representing a unit higher than that marked off by a comma; (3) there is at least one rank above the sentence, namely the paragraph. These do not affect the principle of graphological constituency; but they raise the question of why these further orders of complexity evolved.

The simple answer is: because writing is not the representation of speech sound. While every writing system is related to the sound system of its language in systematic and non-random ways (exactly how the two are related varies from one language to another), the relationship is not a direct one. There is another level of organization in language to which both the sound system and the writing system are related, namely the level of **wording**, or 'lexicogrammar'. (We shall usually refer to this simply as 'grammar', as in the title of the book; but it is important to clarify from the start that grammar and vocabulary are not two separate components of a language – they are just the two ends of a single continuum (see Halliday, 1961; Hasan, 1987; Matthiessen, 1991b; Tucker, 1998, 2007).) The sound system and the writing system are the two modes of **expression** by which the lexicogrammar of a language is represented, or **realized** (to use the technical term).

Since language evolved as speech, in the life of the human species, all writing systems are in origin parasitic on spoken language (cf. Halliday, 1985a; Matthiessen, 2006b); and since language develops as speech, in the life of every hearing individual, this dependency is constantly being re-enacted. Even with the deaf, whose first language uses the visual channel, this is not writing; Sign is more closely analogous to spoken than to written language, signs being in a sense visible forms of articulation and facial expressions visible prosodies. But as writing systems evolve, and as they are mastered and put into practice by the growing child, they take on a life of their own, reaching directly into the wording of the language rather than accessing the wording via the sound; and this effect is reinforced by the functional complementarity between speech and writing. Writing evolved in its own distinct functional contexts of book keeping and administration as 'civilizations' first evolved – it never was just 'speech written down'; and (at least until very recent advances in technology) the two have continued to occupy complementary domains.

So, still keeping for the moment to the notion of constituency, as a way in to exploring how language is organized, let us look at the phenomenon of constituency in lexicogrammar. This will help to explain the principles that lie behind this kind of hierarchic construction, and to understand what is common to different manifestations (such as melodic unit of speech, the line of metric verse, and the sub-sentence of the written text).

1.1.3 Constituency: (3) lexicogrammatical

We will visit Little Miss Muffet just one more time. The punctuation of the text, in the previous section, clearly indicated its graphological composition, in terms of sentences, sub-sentences and words. When we now break down the same text into its grammatical constituents, we find a high degree of correspondence across the higher units: each written



sentence in the graphology is one **clause complex** in the grammar, and each sub-sentence is one **clause**. This is obviously not a coincidence: the two sets of units are related (see Figure 1-3).

		word group	word group	word group	word group
clause complex	clause	<i>little miss muffet</i>	<i>sat</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>a tuffet</i>
	clause	<i>eating</i>	<i>her curds and whey</i>		
clause complex	clause	<i>there</i>	<i>came</i>	<i>a big spider</i>	
	clause	<i>which</i>	<i>sat down</i>	<i>beside</i>	<i>her</i>
	clause	<i>and</i>	<i>frightened</i>	<i>miss muffet</i>	<i>away</i>

Fig. 1-3 Example of grammatical constituency

But they are not identical; the correspondence will not always hold. Little Miss Muffet evolved as a spoken text, so when someone decided to write it down they chose to punctuate it according to the grammar. In Nelson Mandela’s text, on the other hand, the first (written) sentence is grammatically a single clause – but it is written as five sub-sentences. Here the punctuation is telling us more about the phonological structure (the division into tone groups) than about the grammar. There is nothing unusual about this: many writers punctuate phonologically rather than grammatically, or in some mixture of the two. And there are many kinds of written text that are carefully punctuated into sentences and sub-sentences (i.e. with full stops, colons and commas) but containing no clauses or clause complexes at all, like the following:

Text 1-4: Recommending – ‘Classified rates’

CLASSIFIED RATES

£5.10 per line (average six words per line); display £12 per single column centimetre; box numbers £5.

Discounts: 20 per cent for four insertions, 30 per cent for eight insertions, 50 per cent for twelve insertions.

Prices do not include VAT.

London Review of Books, 28 Little Russell Street, London WC1A 2HN.

It is often uncertain whether someone writing about grammar is talking about graphological units or grammatical units. To avoid this confusion we shall call them by different names (as has become the usual practice in systemic functional grammar). We will use **sentence** and **sub-sentence** to refer only to units of orthography. In referring to grammar we will use the term **clause**. When a number of clauses are linked together grammatically we talk of a **clause complex** (each single linkage within a clause complex can be referred to as one **clause nexus**).

Below the clause, the situation is rather different. Graphologically, sub-sentences consist of words – there is no written unit in between. The word is also a grammatical unit; and

here we shall continue to use the same term for both, because the correspondence is close enough (both categories, orthographic word and grammatical word, are equally fuzzy!). Grammatically, however, the constituent of a clause is not, in fact, a word; it is either a phrase or a word group (which we shall call simply **group** from now on). (We have not shown phrases in Little Miss Muffet; there are two examples, *on a tuffet* and *beside her*. For the important difference between a group and a phrase, see Section 6.1 'Groups and phrases' in, Chapter 6.) Grammatically, a word functions as constituent of a group.

Words have constituents of their own, **morphemes**. These are not marked off in the writing system; sometimes they can be identified as the parts of a written word, e.g. *eat + ing*, *curd + s*, *frighten + ed*, or else recognized as traces of its history (*beside*, *away* were both originally dimorphemic). We shall not be dealing systematically with word morphology in this book (see Matthiessen & Halliday, in prep.); but it illustrates the limits of compositional structure in language (and hence the problems of trying to explain all of grammar in constituency terms). Grammarians used to worry a lot about whether to analyse *sat*, *came* as consisting of two morphemes (*sit/come* plus an abstract morpheme 'past' realized as a vowel change); but this is a problem created by the theory. Composition is an important semogenic (meaning-creating) resource; but it should not be allowed to dominate our thinking about grammar.

Let us summarize here the five principles of constituency in lexicogrammar.

- (1) There is a **scale of rank** in the grammar of every language. That of English (which is typical of many³) can be represented as:
 - clause
 - phrase/group
 - word
 - morpheme.
- (2) Each consists of **one or more** units of the rank next below. For example, *Come!* is a clause consisting of one group consisting of one word consisting of one morpheme.⁴
- (3) Units of every rank may form **complexes**: not only clause complexes but also phrase complexes, group complexes, word complexes and even morpheme complexes may be generated by the same grammatical resources.
- (4) There is the potential for **rank shift**, whereby a unit of one rank may be down-ranked (downgraded) to function in the structure of a unit of its own rank or of a

³ Languages vary, however, with respect to the 'division of grammatical labour' among the ranks. In particular, certain languages do relatively more grammatical work at group (and clause) rank, while other languages do relatively more work at word rank. Thus, for example, Japanese, Turkish, and Inuit do relatively more work at word rank, whereas, for example, Thai, Chinese, and Vietnamese do relatively more work at group rank. For instance, verbal affixes operating at word rank in one language may correspond to verbal auxiliaries operating at group rank in another, or even to modal particles operating at clause rank in yet another. This distribution of grammatical work across the rank scale is likely to change over time as a language evolves: there is a strong tendency for higher-ranking items to drift down the rank scale, as when pronouns and auxiliaries lose their status as free words and gradually become bound verbal affixes.

⁴ This is not an arbitrary 'rule'. It is what explains the fact that such an instance is selecting simultaneously in systems of every rank: *Come!* is an 'imperative' (as opposed to 'indicative') clause, a 'positive' (as opposed to 'negative') verbal group, a base (as opposed to derived) form of the verb (word).



rank below. Most commonly, though not uniquely, a clause may be down-ranked to function in the structure of a group.

- (5) Under certain circumstances it is possible for one unit to be **enclosed** within another; not as a constituent of it, but simply in such a way as to split the other one into two discrete parts.

To represent the lexicogrammatical constituents in a passage of written text we adopt the notational conventions set out in Table 1-1 Notational conventions for representing lexicogrammatical constituency (see Table 1-1).

Table 1-1 Notational conventions for representing lexicogrammatical constituency

	clause complex]]	downranked clause complex	<<< >>>	enclosed clause complex
	clause]]	downranked clause	<< >>	enclosed clause
	phrase or group	[]	downranked phrase/group	< >	enclosed phrase/group
# [space]	word				

Examples:

|| out of [the experience [of [an extraordinary human disaster [| that | lasted | too long |]]]] | must be born | a society [| of which | all humanity | will be | proud |] ||

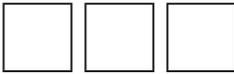
|| did <you> read | that article [the other day] [about [this woman ||| who | was driving | along | somewhere | on [this country road] || when | hail | just suddenly | started pouring down ||]] ||

||| we | understand || that | there | is | more [than [one thing]] [| you | want to achieve | out of [every wash load]] |||

|| today | all of us | do < by [our presence here] and | by [our celebrations [in [other parts [of [our country and the world []]]]] > confer | glory and hope | to [newborn liberty] ||

The clause is the central processing unit in the lexicogrammar – in the specific sense that it is in the clause that meanings of different kinds are mapped into an integrated grammatical structure. For this reason the first half of this book is organized around the principal systems of the clause: theme, mood and transitivity. In Part II we move outward from the clause, to take account of what happens above and below it – systems of the clause complex, of groups and phrases, and of group and phrase complexes; and also beyond the clause, along other dimensions so to speak.

The perspective moves away from structure to consideration of grammar as system, enabling us to show the grammar as a meaning-making resource and to describe grammatical categories by reference to what they mean. This perspective is essential if the analysis of grammar is to be an insightful mode of entry to the study of discourse. But first, in the remainder of the present chapter, we will say a little more about compositional structure, including a more detailed sketch of phonology, so that we can take the relevant aspects of it for granted throughout the rest of the book.



1.2 Phonology and grammar

If we want to take a comprehensive view of English grammar, we must first make an excursion into phonology. This is because there are some grammatical systems that are realized by prosodic means: for example, by the contrast between falling and rising tone.

As we have seen in Section 1.1.1, the units of phonology are organized from largest to smallest according to the phonological rank scale – tone group (melodic line), foot (rhythm group), syllable and phoneme. Each unit is the domain of certain phonological systems, and it can be characterized in terms of a characteristic structure (the exception being the smallest unit, the phoneme): see the summary in Table 1-2. These units can be divided into two regions of articulation and prosody. Articulatory features are associated with smaller units, typically phonemes (vowels and consonants). Prosodic features are associated with larger units; they are features of intonation and rhythm (for an overview of the phonetics of prosody, see Nootboom, 1997). The gateway between the two regions is the syllable; it realizes prosodic features of intonation and rhythm (and may carry its own, e.g. syllabic tone in ‘tone languages’ such as Chinese) and its ‘choreographs’ articulatory gestures (sequences of phonemes).

Table 1-2 The phonological rank scale

Rank	Nature of unit	Major systems	Structure
tone group	prosody: melody (intonation)	TONE, TONICITY, TONALITY	(Pretonic ^) Tonic
foot	prosody: rhythm	FOOT COMPOSITION, ICTUS STATE	Ictus (^ Remiss)
syllable	prosody: salience articulation: articulatory gesture	SYLLABIC COMPOSITION	(Onset ^) Rhyme
phoneme	articulation: articulatory sub-gesture	[ARTICULATORY SYSTEMS:] MANNER, PLACE, NASALITY ETC.	–

As a general principle, articulation is **arbitrary** (conventional), in the sense that there is no systematic relation between sound and meaning (as emphasized by Saussure and further developed by other European structuralist linguists, in particular Hjelmslev and Martinet; see e.g. Halliday, 1985b/2003: 196). Prosody, on the other hand, is **natural** (just as grammar is in relation to semantics; see Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999: 18–22): it is related systematically to meaning, as one of the resources for carrying contrasts in grammar. In this section we give a sketch of the prosodic region of the phonology from the standpoint of its importance to the grammatical description. For a more comprehensive account, see Matthiessen & Halliday (in prep.), Halliday (1967a) and Halliday & Greaves (2008).

1.2.1 Rhythm: the foot

Consider another well-known piece of traditional children’s literature: