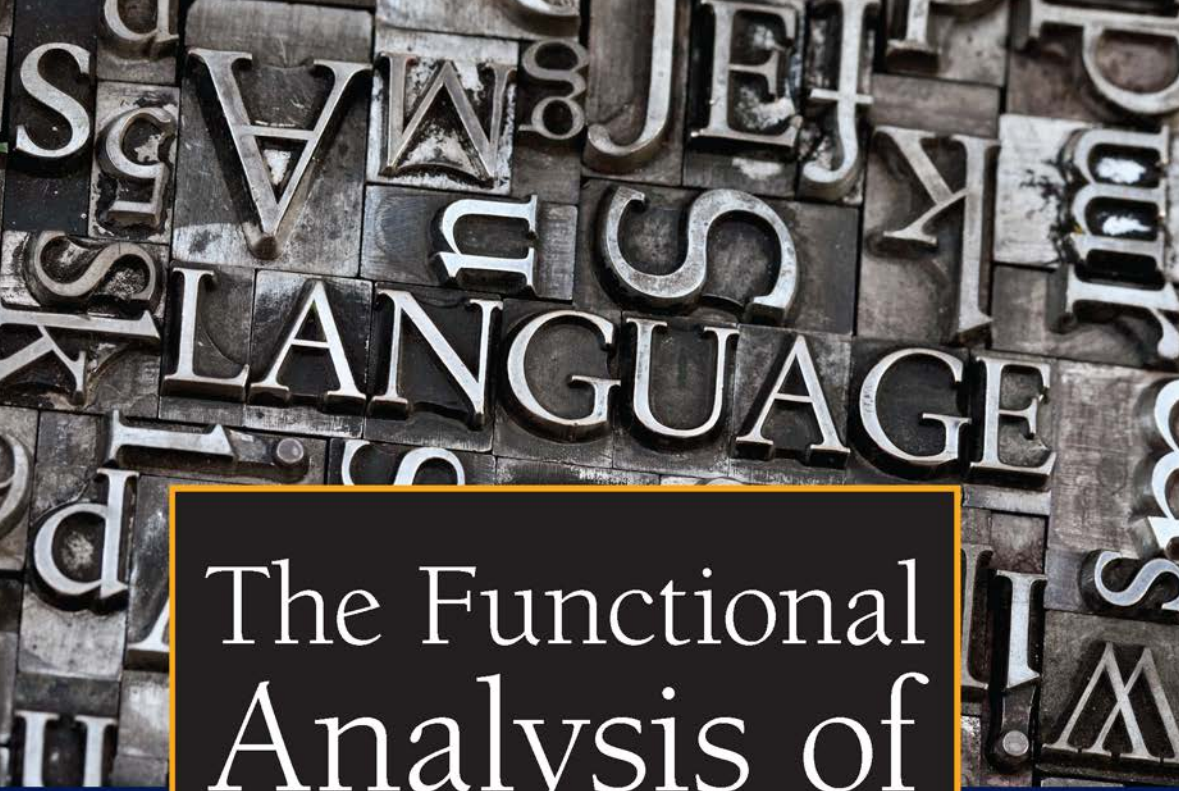

The Functional Analysis of English

THIRD EDITION

Thomas Bloor and Meriel Bloor

COMPANION @ WEBSITE

ROUTLEDGE

The Functional Analysis of English

The Functional Analysis of English is an introduction to the analysis and description of English, based on the principles of systemic functional linguistics. It sets out the tools and analytic techniques of Hallidayan grammar with clear explanations of terminology and illustrates these with examples from a variety of texts, including science, travel, history and literary sources. This revised third edition incorporates references to recent research, better explanations of complex problems, and additional exercises.

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- an updated overview of applications to real world issues
- revised sections on the current historical position of systemic functional grammar
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They are co-authors of *The Practice of Critical Discourse Analysis: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2007).

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The Functional Analysis of English

A Hallidayan Approach

Third Edition

Thomas Bloor and Meriel Bloor

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Preface

In this, the third edition of *The Functional Analysis of English,* we aim to provide the reader with the tools for analyzing English using the techniques of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL).

This model of linguistic study, sometimes known as 'Hallidayan linguistics', has developed rapidly since its foundation in the 1960s with the innovative work of Michael Halliday, who has continued to lead the field. Many other linguists have been attracted by this approach, and major contributions are now being made by a new generation of systemicists, some of whom you will meet in this book. The subject is studied world-wide and used in many applications from language teaching to machine translation.

One result of this expansion is that the field has become more complex as years go by, and students who are new to linguistics increasingly feel the need for a book that provides an accessible introduction. Therefore, we have tried to retain a relatively straightforward approach, with explanations of basic terminology and plenty of examples and exercises, while also incorporating some of the more recent developments.

A problem that we have found in preparing this new edition is that we needed to keep the book at a reasonable length for students to cope with on a university course. In order to bring in new material, we have inevitably had to leave some things out. In deciding what to change, we have been helped by previous students, their teachers and reviewers. Some exercises have been reduced, altered, or replaced. We have continued to focus on practical analysis rather than theory, and some aspects of the grammar are introduced only briefly. As usual we recommend readers to turn to Halliday's own comprehensive introduction (*An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, *Fourth Edition* (2013)) for more complex analysis and the theoretical 'architecture' of the model.

In spite of our efforts, some sections of the book may seem dense and difficult. We cannot pretend that this is an easy subject, and readers may also welcome the new online website, which has background information, extra practice activities and discussion of alternative approaches.

Thomas Bloor
Meriel Bloor

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We must give special mention to those who helped before and have also helped us prepare this third edition: Robin Fawcett, Chris Gledhill, Sheena Gardner, Anne McCabe, Hilary Nesi and Michael Toolan. Their speedy responses to requests for references, information and student feedback have been invaluable, as has the Sysfling online discussion group. Many thanks also to every user of the book around the world who has taken the trouble to communicate with us. Oliver Mackie sent lively emails that got us thinking again about constituents, Beatriz Quiroz sent useful news about publications, Claudia Stoian provided a relevant sample of data for Chapter 9. We would also like to thank our insightful and encouraging anonymous reviewers. We would also like to thank our insightful and encouraging anonymous reviewers, and, last but not least, our editors at Routledge: Anna Callander and Sophie Jaques.

List of symbols

S	Subject
F	Finite
P	Predicator
C	Complement
A^{cir}	circumstantial Adjunct
A^{con}	conjunctive Adjunct
A^{mod}	modal Adjunct
|	group boundary
[ ]	embedded group
< >	enclosed elements at clause rank: e.g. fused Finite/Predicator interrupting a discontinuous Subject
||	clause boundary
[[ ]]	embedded clause
<< >>	enclosed clause (i.e. a clause which interrupts another)
|||	clause complex boundary
α, β, γ, δ, ε, ζ	alpha, beta, gamma, delta, epsilon, zeta Greek alphabetic symbols used to represent dependency β depends on α, γ on β, δ on γ and so on

SFL capitalization conventions

Initial capital letters are used for function labels; e.g. Adjunct, Senser, Participant, Mood.
Small capitals are used for names of systems: e.g. MOOD, POLARITY.
Otherwise, lower case letters are used, for example, with:

- some of the above when referred to rather than labelled: e.g. participant, process
- general grammatical terms such as word classes, groups, etc.: e.g. adverb, operator, projection, nominal group, relative clause, dependent clause
- modifiers of capitalized function labels: e.g. circumstantial Adjunct, verbal Process.

1

A meaningful approach

1.1 *How to use this book*

This book provides an introduction to the analysis of English. The aim is to provide the reader with the grammatical tools needed to take samples of English apart and find out how the language works. It is by the process of analysis that linguists build up descriptions of the language and gradually discover more about how people use language.

Readers who are new to this subject may find it useful to familiarize themselves with the way in which the book is organized and with the tools that are provided to assist the reader. Of the 12 chapters in this book, the first two are introductory. Chapter 1 introduces some general concepts of the model of grammar and Chapter 2 deals with basic terms used in grammatical analysis. These are followed by eight chapters each focusing on a different key aspect of linguistic analysis.

Towards the end of each chapter there is a brief summary of the ground covered and a short *Further study* section, which suggests additional reading and sometimes raises controversial issues. The *Further study* sections are particularly suitable for advanced students or those who have a particular interest in the topic discussed. Chapters 1 to 10 end with short practice exercises. These can be done by individuals or by groups of students. Some are 'open-ended', having more than one possible answer, but most have correct answers, which can be found in the answer key at the end of the book.

After the answer key, there is a glossary, which provides brief explanations of technical terminology. Most terms are introduced and explained as they arise in this book. Even so, the large number of technical terms can sometimes present difficulties, and the glossary is the place where readers can check the meaning of a term. The glossary does not offer precise definitions, and the glosses are not intended to be accessible independently of the rest of the book.

The analytical approach taken in this book is, in the main, drawn from the work of the linguist Michael Halliday, in particular the model of grammar set out in some detail in *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (1985,

1994) and later editions revised by Matthiessen (2004 and 2013), henceforth referred to by the initials IFG. This branch of linguistics is known by the name of Systemic Functional Linguistics and is usually referred to in this book as SFL. The grammar that systemic functional linguists have developed is known as Systemic Functional Grammar or SFG.

Other linguists working in a similar tradition also have a significant influence on some sections of this book. Mention of the work of these linguists can be found in the *Further study* sections and in the list of *References*, at the end of the book, just before the index.

Since readers are not expected to be familiar with Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), there is some simplification of the more complex and comprehensive work and of the theoretical underpinnings of the grammar.

1.1.1 Using the website

As additional support, sections of this book are now supplemented with work on the companion website. This website contains: (1) more exercises to help readers who feel they need extra practice of particular points; (2) open-ended activities where readers can try out sample research problems; and (3) supplementary readings to provide extra background or introduce controversial issues for discussion. The website address is: www.routledge.com/CW/Bloor.

However, the work in this book is quite independent of the website. Readers should not worry if they are unable to access the supplementary materials.

1.2 *Grammar and meaning*

There are certain theoretical and practical principles that must be introduced because they are crucial to the type of analysis that is presented in this book. In this chapter, therefore, as a first step, we outline the nature of these principles. In Chapter 12, we explain how these principles can be seen as part of a historical tradition in linguistics and indicate something of how they differ from other theoretical approaches.

For SFL, a language is a 'system of meanings'. That is to say that, when people use language, their language acts produce or, more technically, *construct* meaning. From this point of view, grammar becomes a study of how meanings are built up through the choice of words and other grammatical resources such as singular or plural, negative or positive, and other linguistic forms such as tone and emphasis. This may seem fairly obvious to most people since it accords with a commonsense view of language, but not all linguists have been concerned with meaning in such a direct way as Systemic Functional grammarians.

Linguists have approached the study of English from different points of view. Some, for example, have tried to account for formal aspects of the grammar of the language largely divorced from meanings. Others have started out by looking at words and sentences (language forms) and then asked how the forms of the language represent meanings. Here, we take the view that the approach that is likely to be most successful will be one that recognizes *meaning* and *use* as central features of language and that tackles grammar from this point of view. It follows from this that the grammar is *semantic* (concerned with meaning) and *functional* (concerned with how the language is used). Moreover, it is also a *lexicogrammar*, a term that embraces the idea that vocabulary (lexis) is inextricably linked to grammatical choices.

1.3 *Meaning potential*

We have said that the *theory of language* followed in SFL involves the idea that a language consists of a set of systems, which offers the speaker (or writer) an unlimited choice of ways of creating meanings.

Thus, if I want to know the time, I might use one of the following expressions (or any one of many more ways that the language offers us).

(1) What's the time?
(2) Tell me the time, please.
(3) I'd like to know the time.

Although each of these examples includes the word *'the time'*, there is considerable variation in the choice of other words. In addition, the first expression uses the *interrogative* mood, the second uses the *imperative* mood and the third uses the *declarative* mood. (The MOOD system is discussed further in Chapter 3.)

Linguistic choice is available to speakers not only with regard to interrogatives, imperatives and declaratives; it operates at every point in the production of speech. We may, for example, refer to a shop as 'the supermarket' or 'the store'; we may address our father as 'Dad', 'Daddy', 'Pop' or by the use of his personal name or some invented nickname. Options also permit use of full sentences or indicate meaning by the use of one or two words. Either (4a) or (4b) might be an equally satisfactory answer to the question 'What's the time?'

(4a) Four-thirty.
(4b) It's half-past four.

Some of the options available are different grammatical formulations of the same idea, each of which would be appropriate in a different language environment. The next three examples all carry similar meaning but with different grammatical formulations. This means that they would be likely to appear in different linguistic contexts.

- the prosecution disagreed with what had been decided by the judge
- the prosecution disagreed with the judge's decision
- … the prosecution's disagreement with the judge's decision …

The first two could stand as sentences on their own, the third would have to be part of a longer sentence. Structures of this type, which are semantically related but not identical, are said to be *agnate*.

Most of the linguistic choices we make are unconscious. We do not usually stop and think about whether to use a past tense or a present tense verb, and the choice between active and passive sentences depends on the circumstances of use, as we can see from the examples (5) and (6) taken from a book for parents[1] on the subject of teaching children to fish.

(5) Last summer, my boys finally *caught* their first fish. <active>
(6) It is said that many more fish *are caught* in May or June than in any other months. <passive>

In (5) the writer is telling us something that his sons did the previous summer. He refers to them as 'my boys' and uses the past tense, active voice, of the verb 'catch' (*caught*) because the language makes this form available for completed past actions. However, in (6) the same writer uses a different form of the verb, the present tense, passive voice: *are caught*. In (6) he does not mention *who* is responsible for the action of catching the fish. The Subject of the verb is *many more fish*, and the writer is simply making a general comment about the fish that are caught in May or June, regardless of who is responsible for the catching. Moreover, here the writer is not writing about a completed past action, but about something that happens regularly every year. The point is that English makes available a different verb form for the two different situations, and speakers of English use the appropriate forms.

It is not that the author has necessarily made a *conscious* choice among the available language forms. He has created his meaning by drawing on the forms that are available to him as a speaker/writer, partly consciously (as a professional writer) and partly without reflection (as a speaker of English). He has made use of what is known as the *meaning potential* of the language by using forms that are appropriate in context.

In everyday speech we are constantly making unconscious context-relevant choices, such as referring to a person as either 'he' or 'she' or to a place as 'here' or 'there'. In part, we select from what linguists term the *paradigms* of the language, a paradigm being a system of choices made potentially available to us by the language we are using. Thus, there is a paradigmatic relationship between *masculine*, *feminine* and *neuter*, another between *singular* and *plural*, another between *active* and *passive* and so on. These choices can be represented as *systems*, which inter-relate with each other and can be represented in *network* diagrams.

1.4 *System networks*

We have said that in this book we use Systemic Functional Grammar. The word *systemic* encapsulates the idea that an important aspect of the grammar is modelled (or described) in terms of *systems*, a series of alternatives that are available to speakers of the language. Thus, for example, the relationship between Active and Passive is represented in the system of VOICE, and the relationship between positive and negative is represented in the system of POLARITY. (Notice that the names of systems and networks – not functions – are conventionally presented in small capitals.)

To take a simple example, we will consider the potential in English for alternative forms of nouns. A noun can be either singular (a *rose*, *one rose*, say) or plural (*roses*, *many roses*, *seven roses*). However, this choice is not true for all nouns in English, as there is a special class of nouns (*water*, *money*, *information*, for example) that is in a special place in the NUMBER system. This class of nouns is known as *mass nouns* (sometimes called *uncountable nouns* or *non-count nouns*). Nouns of this type cannot be used with cardinal numbers and normally only appear in the singular form. We can represent this tiny part of English grammar in diagrammatic form.

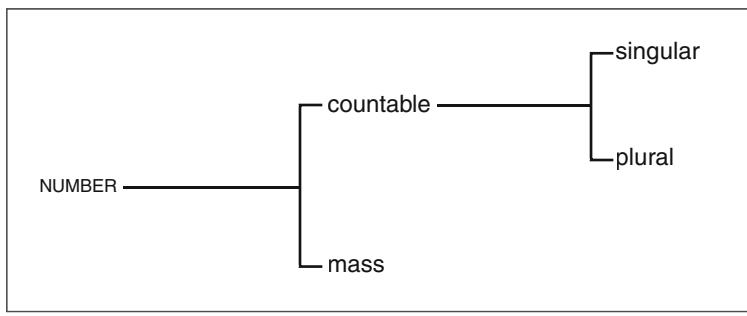

Fig. 1.1

This can be understood with respect to English as saying that a noun can be a countable noun or a mass noun, and that, if it is countable, it will be singular or plural. The use of square brackets indicates that *countable* and *mass* are alternatives and that *singular* and *plural* are alternatives.

We could add more to this network so that, for example, it accounted for regular or irregular plurals.

We could link it to a system of PERSON that includes the paradigm of singular and plural possessives (*my*, *your*, *his*, *her*, *its* and *our*, *your*, *their*) or to a system of DEIXIS that, among other things, models the use of words like *this*, *that*, *these*, *those*, *each*, *every*, *some*. At this point, however, the options become very complicated, as we can see from the simple case of articles (*the*,

a, and *an*) since, depending on the context, *the* can be used with singular, plural and mass nouns, but *a* and *an* can be used only with singular nouns, not with mass nouns. However, *some* and *any* can be used with mass nouns and plural nouns (*some girls*; *some information*), and *both* can only be used for a plural of two (dual). In a network diagram, this partial information would appear as follows, where examples of a choice of wording are given in square brackets:

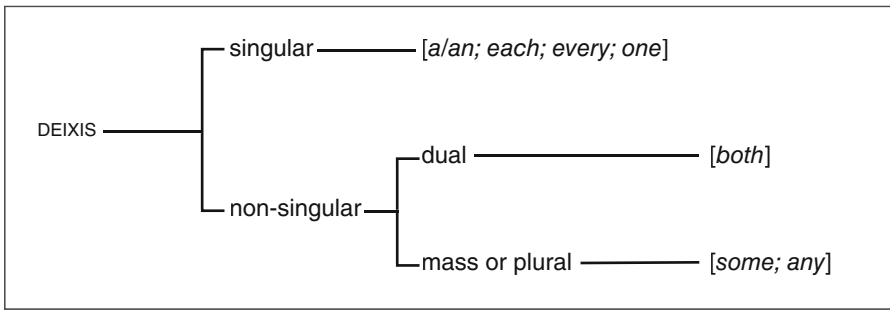

Fig. 1.2

There are conventions (or accepted rules) for the construction of network diagrams for systems in the language and these are neatly summarized in Halliday (2009). (See the *further study* for references.)

It has been frequently noted that networks can be very complex, especially when they are linked together to characterize huge chunks of the language. Large system networks have been built as part of research projects in computational linguistics, but they are not directly relevant to the topics covered in this present book. However, appreciating how the grammar works can be helpful in the analysis of how the language is used and to this end it is sometimes necessary to consider paradigms and system networks.

1.5 *Language in use*

When people use language to make meanings, they do so in specific situations, and the form of the language that they use in *discourse* is influenced by the complex aspects of those situations.

Thus, to offer some obvious examples, we greet people in different ways depending on the time of day, where we are and who we are talking to. Teachers speak differently when they are addressing a class from when they are talking to a parent or the Minister of Education. Teachers who fail to adapt their speech to different situations and talk to everyone as though they were disruptive children will become, at best, objects of humour, and, at worst, targets of serious resentment. A speaker at an outdoor meeting is likely to use

different rhetorical devices and a different tone of voice from a lecturer in a university or an after-dinner speaker at a family wedding.

Situation also affects the form of written English. A business letter requesting payment of a debt is likely to be very different in format and style from a letter on a similar topic written to an old friend who owes the correspondent some money. The situation affects not only the choice of words but also the grammar that is used.

The situation can have such a constraining effect on language that society often develops clear conventions of use (like those associated with business meetings or formal greetings) which have to be learned before newcomers to the circumstances can behave appropriately. The contexts in which language is used (business companies, courts of law, research laboratories and so on) lead over time to the development of specific socially recognized forms known as *genres* (such as business letters, cross-examination and laboratory reports) and styles or *registers* (such as business English, legal English and scientific English).

The number of situations to which most very young children are exposed is relatively limited – usually the situations found in the home environment in the company of family and friends – but, as children grow and move into the wider society of the school and community, the range of situations in which they can use language appropriately expands. Children may come in contact with invitations, folk stories, comics, recipes and so on. Most of this language use is acquired without conscious attention, but some situations require such complex language production that training is necessary. Our education system accounts for some of this training; children are helped in school to write narratives, essays and reports of scientific experiments, for example, and later they may practise debating or public speaking, where they need to communicate orally with a larger audience than is found in one-to-one or small group interaction.

One result of this is that, faced with a fragment of written text, say, from a love letter, a business letter or a newspaper report, adult English-speakers do not usually find it difficult to recognize the situations in which the particular instances of language were used. Often, a recording of a speaker (for example, an announcement by a flight attendant on an aeroplane, a politician speaking on the radio, or a doctor talking to a patient) can be easily recognized and identified. (In Exercise 1.1 at the end of this chapter, you can try your hand at recognizing the situations in which some written texts were constructed.)

1.6 *The study of texts*

An important feature of a systemic functional approach to linguistic study is its insistence on studying actual instances of language that have been used

(or are being used) by speakers or writers. That is not to say that we may never take an interest in sentences that we, as speakers of the language, have simply invented as examples, but that, on the whole, we are more likely to arrive at interesting and useful descriptions of English if we investigate *authentic texts*. Of course, an example may be part of an authentic text when it is presented as an example and is understood as an example by the hearer or reader.

A *text* is any stretch of language, regardless of length, that is spoken or written for the purposes of communication by real people in actual circumstances. Both spoken and written texts are equally valid as objects for analysis. When linguists study or analyze a spoken text, they record the text, or part of the text, either in writing or electronically. Electronic recordings can be *transcribed* (written as accurately as possible, often using some system that can represent pronunciation and intonation). The fact that linguists study fixed written forms of texts could suggest that language itself is somehow fixed or static. This, of course, is not true. A spoken conversation, for example, moves forward in time, and the basis on which speakers and listeners express and interpret meaning is constantly changing. Communication is an interactive process through which meaning is negotiated in real time. Writers attempt to communicate with their readers and expect them to respond emotionally or intellectually to the text. Readers often mentally question what they read and have expectations about how a text will proceed. In a detective story, for example, the facts of the case are introduced gradually by the author so that the readers' perceptions will change as they move through the book until they eventually grasp the secret of the plot. The linguistic context is *dynamic* and using language is a dynamic process.

In order to explain how human language works, contemporary linguists are often interested in this aspect of language (sometimes called *discourse*) and functional linguists have been in the forefront of this type of work. The text is the data used as the object of study, but we have to remember that it was originally produced as language within a communicative event.

It is via the analysis of texts that we are able to increase our understanding of the linguistic system and of how it enables speakers and writers to produce and process coherent meaning. The choice of words and the word order of one sentence often depend on the meaning of a previous sentence. For example, in Text 1A, the heading and the first sentence both refer the reader to 'beavers', large rodents found in North America. Readers of the first paragraph understand that the subsequent uses of *they* and *their* (printed in bold type in Text 1A) refer to the beavers. Similarly, readers of the second paragraph can see that *another type* and *a third variety* are connected to the expression *one type of beaver house* and understand that all three expressions refer to beavers' dwellings. (Chapter 5 deals with this topic in greater detail.)

Beavers
Working in colonies, **beavers** perform extraordinary engineering feats. **They** cut large quantities of timber for **their** construction projects and for the green bark **they** eat. **They** build canals on which to transport the wood. **They** build complex houses of various designs and also erect ambitious dams to keep the water level high enough so that marauders cannot find **their** dwellings.

One type of beaver house is burrowed into the bank of a pond, with the entrance underwater and the living quarters above water. **Another type** is constructed in the pond itself and looks like a brush pile. **A third variety** is built as part of a dam.

Text 1A (Martin *et al*. (eds), *The Penguin Book of the Natural World*)[1]

The linguistic analysis of texts has many practical applications above and beyond knowledge about language for its own sake. It can help us to find out why some texts are more effective than other texts at communicating or persuading. It can help us to understand the nature of propaganda, the success or failure of some types of political speeches, or how breakdowns in communication can occur. It can even sometimes help in the identification of a criminal by revealing the likely author of a text or of a speaker in a recorded telephone conversation. That is to say, text analysis can be used as a tool for the *evaluation* of texts. In addition, text analysis is currently being used to give us a better understanding of the nature of language use in English in specific fields such as business or science, and such work can be applied to the design of teaching syllabuses for language learners. (Some applications are discussed in more detail in Chapter 11.)

1.7 *The notion of rank*

In this section, we begin the study of the *structure* of the clause. In written English the usual way of grouping ideas or information together is by the use of *sentences*, marked by a capital letter and a full stop. However, in spoken language, there is no such clearly recognizable unit although we intuitively recognize information units by the way spoken English uses intonation. Continuous speech is a series of *tone groups*, indicating which information is 'known' (or familiar to the speakers) and which information is presented as 'new'.

As far as grammar is concerned, the main unit of structure is said to be a *clause*. A clause is made up of identifiable constituents, each of which has its

own structure and follows a grammatical pattern. To show the clause *constituents* (or how clauses are structured), SFL employs the notion of *rank*. In brief, this simply states that

a **clause** consists of one or more groups;
a **group** consists of one or more words;
a **word** consists of one or more **morphemes**.

Each of these ranks refers to a unit of meaning at the level of the clause or below (the *rank scale* as it is called) and we explain this in more detail below.

It is, however, possible to link or bind one clause to another clause or even to a number of other clauses. When this happens, the result is known as a *clause complex*. This can be seen in the constructed examples (7a), (7b) and the authentic example (7c).

(7a) In the lower layers of the sea there are fewer animals. (one clause)
(7b) In the lower layers of the sea there are fewer animals and they tend to eat each other. (two clauses = a clause complex)
(7c) In the lower layers of the sea, there are fewer animals and they tend to eat each other because there is no plant life. (three clauses = a clause complex)

Because these are all written examples, we can say that all three are *sentences*. But, grammatically speaking, (7a) is a clause and (7b) and (7c) each consist of more than one clause. We can see then that the term *sentence* in SFL does not carry the same information as the term *clause* or *clause complex*, even though it is often used to refer loosely to the same unit/s.

Examples of clauses, groups, words and morphemes can be seen in Figure 1.3. Notice that this figure does not show a full analysis of the constituents of the clauses, but just provides random examples at each rank.

Rank	**Example**
Clause	• in the lower layers of the sea, there are fewer animals • (and) they tend to eat each other • (because) there is no plant life
Group	• the lower layers of the sea • fewer animals • are • each other
Word	• the • and • lower • and • layers • fewer
Morpheme	• layer • are • -s • few • the • -er

Fig. 1.3 Examples of each rank in the clause

1.7.1 The clause and its constituents

In SFG, then, the major unit of grammatical analysis is the *clause*. The clause has a special place in expressing meaning because it is at this rank that we can begin to talk about how things exist, how things happen and how people feel in the world around us. It is also at the rank of clause that we usually use language to interact with others. In other words, instead of simply uttering sounds or single words, we can construct complex ideas and show how one idea relates to another.

As we saw above, a sentence may consist of one or more clauses. As an illustration, the following sentence from Text 1A (Section 1.5) consists of three clauses, shown in Fig. 1.4.

> *They*| *build*| *complex houses of various designs*| [*and*] *also*| *erect*| *dams* [*so that*] *marauders*| *cannot find*| *their dwellings*.

We have said that a clause consists of one or more groups. Each group is said to be a *constituent* of the clause and, in the example, the groups are separated by vertical slashes. This is the conventional marker of a group's boundaries. Some groups consist of only one word, some of two, some of three and one of five (*complex houses of various designs*). The words *and also* show the relationship (addition) between the ideas constructed by the first two clauses. The words *so that* show the relationship between the second and third clauses (purpose).

Clause 1	they | build | complex houses of various designs|
Clause 2	[and] also | (they) erect | dams|
Clause 3	[so that] marauders | cannot find |their dwellings|

Fig. 1.4

In SFL, constituency is closely related to the rank scale. Hence, a *group* is a constituent unit of a clause, and a *word* is a constituent unit of a group. A *morpheme* is a constituent of a word.

A morpheme is any word or part of a word, regardless of length, that carries meaning. Thus *dam* is a single morpheme but *dams* consists of two morphemes: *dam* which carries the dictionary meaning and '*s*' which carries the meaning of plurality. *Marauders* consists of three morphemes: *maraud* + *er*+*s*, where *er* tells us that the word refers to whoever performs this action and the *s* tells us that there is more than one. Prefixes (like *in-*, *un-*, *dis-*) and suffixes (like *-ing*, *-en*, *-ment*) are morphemes in English.

1.8 *Functions and metafunctions*

In Section 1.2 we said that the grammar described in this book is *functional* and we explained this as being concerned with *language in use*. In fact, the notion of function in grammar is more complex than this. In this section, we discuss two different uses of the word *function* in linguistics and applied linguistics and then we consider how the term *metafunction* is used.

1.8.1 Grammatical functions

The word *function* is often used for the way a word or a group operates in relation to other words or groups in the clause. Each element is said, therefore, to have some *function* within the linguistic system. One type of language analysis depends on assigning grammatical functions to linguistic items. Hence we might say that in the clause || *beavers perform extraordinary engineering feats* || (from Text 1A), *beavers* functions as Subject. *Subject* is a functional label and is given an initial capital letter 'S' in SFL. Other functions are introduced in Chapters 3, 4, and 6.

1.8.2 The communicative function of utterances

In language teaching and applied linguistics nowadays, many people equate the term *function* with situational use. In this sense we can say that each individual utterance in a given context has a particular *use*. For example, a speaker might say the words, 'Good afternoon' as a means of greeting a friend at an appropriate time of day. We can say that the *communicative function* of 'Good afternoon' is *greeting*. In a different context the same words can have a different communicative function. For example, if a student is late for morning school and misses part of the first lesson, the teacher might sarcastically say, 'Good afternoon'. The fact that the words are not spoken in the afternoon indicates to the listeners that in this case the function is not a simple *greeting*, but a *reprimand* or perhaps a *joke*. In this way, the same words can have a different communicative function in a different situation. This way of looking at communication is based on what philosophers know as 'speech act theory'.

In a similar way, different utterances can be used with the same communicative function. So, for example, a woman might tell her child to take off his shoes in a direct way (*Take your shoes off*, *Robin*) or in a less direct way (*Would you take your shoes off please*, *Robin?*) or in an extremely indirect way (*You haven't taken your shoes off*, *Robin*). In each case the function of directing the child to take his shoes off is broadly similar even though the wording and the tone convey different nuances.

SFL takes this issue further by describing more precise ways in which meaning and form are related, either grammatically or intonationally. IFG (Section 4.6) makes the point that the relationship between the forms of utterances and the types of meaning they can express is a complex one which is based on the principle that what speakers say is closely related to the context in which they are saying it. In addition, all adult language is organized around a small number of 'functional components' which correspond to metafunctions (or the purposes which underlie all language use) and these *metafunctions* have a systematic relationship with the lexicogrammar of the language. We now turn to a discussion of metafunctions.

1.8.3 Metafunctions

The ways in which human beings use language are classified in SFL into three broad categories known as *metafunctions* (see Fig. 1.5):

- Language is used to organize, understand and represent our perceptions of the world and of our own consciousness. This is known as the *ideational metafunction*. The ideational metafunction is classified in IFG into two subfunctions: the *experiential metafunction* and the *logical metafunction*. The experiential is largely concerned with content or ideas. The logical is concerned with the relationship between ideas.
- Language is used to enable us to participate in communicative acts with other people, to take on roles and to express and understand feelings, attitude and judgements; this metafunction is known as the *interpersonal metafunction*.
- Language is used to relate what is said (or written) to the rest of the text and to other linguistic events; this involves the use of language to organize the text itself and is known as the *textual metafunction*.

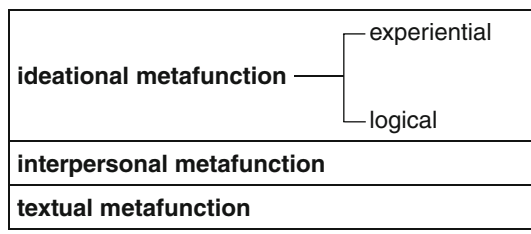

Fig. 1.5 The metafunctions

Since the grammar of any language has developed through the ages to serve people's communicative needs, Halliday (1978: 22) argues that 'It is the demands posed by the service of these functions which have moulded the

shape of language and fixed the course of its evolution.' This very strong claim is the basis of the theory of functional grammar.

Newcomers to functional grammar are sometimes confused by metafunctions because they expect them to operate independently and discretely. This is a mistaken expectation. In almost any instance of language use, all three metafunctions operate simultaneously in the creation of meaning in relation to the context.

We can see examples of the metafunctions in Text 1B, but we will not analyse it in detail at this stage since much of this book is concerned with explaining (and expanding on) the ideas in this section.

> There are four things a young child ought to learn about fishing his first time out. *First*, hooks are sharp. Demonstrate this by lightly pressing the point against the fleshy part of his thumb. *Second*, a pole is held in a certain way (usually at the end in two hands, one above the other). *Third*, noise frightens the fish away. *Fourth*, the fisherman must be patient. Perhaps the best way to teach patience is to be patient yourself, since his attitude will depend to a considerable extent on how you behave.

Text 1B (Schwartz, *How to Fly a Kite*, *Catch a Fish*, *Grow a Flower*)[2]

This passage is mainly concerned with giving information about the state of the world. Hence, much of the language expresses the ideational metafunction (see Fig. 1.5) (for example, *hooks are sharp*, *noise frightens the fish away*). The other branch of the ideational metafunction is realized in *since* in the last sentence. *Since* establishes the logical relationship (in this case of *reason*) between the two main ideas in the sentence.

However, the writer (a man) also reveals his attitude and shows that he is expressing an opinion through the use of modality (for example, *ought to*; *must be*; *perhaps*). This reflects the interpersonal metafunction. The writer is advising parents, the target readers, on how to teach their children to fish. 'Perhaps' indicates that the final point is merely a suggestion, which a reader might reject, in contrast to the earlier advice which indicates more urgent matters by the use of 'ought to' and 'must be'.

Incidentally, he also shows, by the use of *his* and *fisherman*, that he expects the child who is learning to fish to be a boy rather than a girl, a view that we might wish to question. This use of language also reveals certain attitudes of the writer (his *ideology*), but in this case he is presenting the ideas as being representative of the world as he sees it and so his attitude could be said to be 'hidden' within the ideational framework.

The textual metafunction is realized through the word order of the sentences, through which the writer sequences the message for the reader, and also through the numerals, *first*, *second*, *third* and *fourth*, which the writer uses to signal the salient points of his message.

It is the meshing of these metafunctions in the lexicogrammar of the clause that realizes the meaning of the text as an act of communication between the writer and his readers.

Summary

In this chapter we have introduced some key ideas, practical and theoretical, that are important in the linguistic analysis of English. In Sections 1.2 and 1.3 we explained the importance of *meaning* in a functional grammar and introduced the terms *paradigm* and *system*. In Section 1.5 we introduced *system networks*. Section 1.5 considered the importance of *situation* in the creation of *language in use* and of functional varieties (*registers*) and text types (*genres*). This was followed, in Section 1.6, by an explanation of how the term *text* is used in SFL and a discussion of how grammar is utilized in stretches of language with an example of cohesive reference. Section 1.7 briefly introduced the notion of *rank*, and finally, in Section 1.8, we looked at two different uses of the term *function*, grammatical function and communicative function, ending the chapter with an explanation of the three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal and textual.

Further study

Since our book focuses on the practical application of SFL to the analysis of written English, the articulatory features and prosodic feature of spoken English are barely discussed. For work on English intonation, see Tench (1996), Greaves (2007) and Halliday and Greaves (2008). For the analysis of English conversation, see Eggins and Slade (2005), and for a range of articles on spoken discourse in general, see Coulthard (ed. 1992).

The concern with the way in which context and situation influence language in use (Section 1.5) places SFL firmly in the tradition of Firth, a British linguist of the first part of the twentieth century. Context has been classified into *context of culture*, *context of situation* and *co-text* (or the linguistic environment of an utterance). For discussion of this and related issues, see Firth (1957: 37–50), Halliday (1978, especially Chapters 1, 5, and 13) and Hasan (1996: 37–50). An introduction to the social context of discourse can be found in Bloor and Bloor (2007: Ch. 2) and a more advanced, theoretical overview in Hasan (2009).

A fuller account of constituency and rank in systemic grammar is found in Butler (2003a: 5.2.2). The rank scale, while widely used and well established in SFL, has long been subjected to some criticism, for example, by Matthews (1966).The objections were defended at the time by Halliday (reprinted in Halliday 2002a: 118–26). The on-going debate has continued (see Fawcett 2000a: appendix C).

Numerous examples of system networks can be found in the most recent editions of IFG. For an introduction to the principles and construction conventions of system networks, see Halliday (2009: 63–70, 84) and Fawcett (2008: 93–103).

Exercises

Many of these exercises can be done effectively in discussion with a partner or in a small group. See also extra exercises and activities for this and other sections in this book on the website: www.hodderplus.com/linguistics.

Exercise 1.1

Each of the following short texts is taken from a different published source. They were all originally written to be read. Read them carefully and decide on the possible origin of each text.

1. Aspirin belongs to a group of medicines called non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Aspirin thins the blood, which helps reduce the likelihood of heart attacks. These tablets have been especially coated to help minimize stomach upset.
2. The hotel is within walking distance of a few shops and restaurants in Playa de San Augustin. This peaceful attractive resort boasts a dark, sandy beach where a wide variety of watersports are available.
3. Heat the oil in a saucepan, add the rice and stir until it becomes translucent. Add the coconut milk, bay leaf and salt. Bring to the boil and cook until all the liquid is absorbed. Stir in chopped coriander leaves and chopped green peppers. Fork through the rice and serve with mashed hard-boiled egg.
4. Byzantium: Ancient city on the shores of the Bosphorus on the site of present day Istanbul (Turkey). First established c. 650 BC and destroyed by Romans AD 196.
5. The successful candidate will have an adaptable friendly nature with a ‘can do’ attitude. Good oral and written communication skills essential.

Exercise 1.2

In Section 1.3 of this chapter you saw an example of each of the following moods: *declarative*, *interrogative* and *imperative*. In this exercise you will find sentences from a conversation in a novel. Label each clause appropriately. The first three have been done for you.

What's your business here? (*interrogative*)
I've been robbed. (*declarative*)
Lay hold of him! (*imperative*)

1. What do you want with me?
2. You stole my money.
3. (a) Give it me back and (b) I won't set the constable on you. (2 clauses)
4. You're as wet as a drowned rat.
5. (a) Sit down, (b) dry yourself, and (c) speak straight. (3 clauses)
6. Ay, ay, make him sit down.
7. Now then, what's this you've got to say?

Exercise 1.3

Read the following short text from a travel brochure and discuss the textual and interpersonal metafunctions as they are realized in (a) the order in which the information is presented and the way in which this order is signalled by the writer; (b) which sentences or phrases (if any) reveal the attitude of the writer to the places described; and (c) which words or phrases (if any) refer to the writer and which to possible readers of the brochure.

Welcome to Singapore, a city of many colours and contrasts, cultures and cuisines. …

Even if your visit is a short stopover between flights, it is possible to take in some of Singapore's sights before departure. An evening out with a tour group can lead to all sorts of fun and adventure.

One tour unveils the cultural diversity of Singapore and features its Indian, Chinese and Peranakan heritages. It takes in Little India and samples local food, including the flakey, pancake style bread, *roti prata*.

Next stop is the *Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Temple*, Singapore's largest Buddhist temple, with its magnificent statues, including one carved from a 10-ton block of marble.

The tour then continues to the Straits National Gallery where you can discover the unique Chinese/Malay Peranakan culture.

The final stop is Arab Street to explore the vibrant Malay culture and the old charm that the area has retained.

Text 1C From *Singapore: An Official Guide* (edited)

Notes

1. This example is from Martin, E., Larkin, S. and Barnbaum, L. (eds) 1976: *The Penguin Book of the Natural World*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
2. Schwartz, Alvin 1967: *How to Fly a Kite*, *Catch a Fish*, *Grow a Flower*. New York: Macmillan Pocket Books.

2

Labels

2.1 *Music, mathematics, medicine and motor-vehicle maintenance*

All disciplines use technical terms. The field of music uses the labels *chord*, *note*, *semitone*, *octave*, *tonic*, *dominant*, *subdominant* and many, many more. In mathematics books, we find terms such as *angle*, *decimal*, *fraction*, *factor*, *hypotenuse* and *ratio*. Doctors talk about *hypothermia*, *gastritis*, *lesions* and *oedema.* Motor-vehicle mechanics make use of terms such as *spark plug*, *gear*, *cambelt*, and *solenoid.* The study of language also has its specialized vocabulary of technical terms.

2.2 *A political parable*

Suppose some mad dictator, believing that people who worked in garages were using specialist language in order to bewilder and cheat their customers, decided to ban the use of technical terms for motor-vehicle maintenance. Under this lunatic regime, mechanics would be permitted to talk about the parts of an engine in 'ordinary' language but would not be allowed to use the specialist terms which they use today. For example, mechanics might refer to the *brake* as the *thing that puts pressure on the wheels to stop them turning* but they could not refer to it as a *brake*. (This assumes that *wheel* is not a technical term, which is a questionable assumption.) It does not require a great leap of the imagination to see that insuperable difficulties would arise, particularly when they came to talking about items which are known in the repair shops of more tolerant societies as the *power train control module* or the *reverse gear selector pivot pin.* Almost certainly, this mad enterprise is entirely impossible. But, even if it were possible, mechanics would fairly soon be using shorthand terms for these descriptions: the thing that puts pressure on *the wheels to stop them turning* might be called the *wheelstopper* or the *squeezer.* Would the dictator's thought police feel that this was a breach of the law? How long would it be before names like *brake*, *power train control module* and *reverse gear selector pivot pin* re-emerged?

Clearly, the whole scenario is ridiculous. Yet our hypothetical dictator's position is not a million miles from the attitude taken by some people to the use of technical terms in the study of language. These people seem to perceive grammatical terminology as part of a conspiracy to baffle the general public. Some think that we can make the discussion of language easier by using descriptive statements rather than labels, or, if labels are used, they prefer labels which sound less technical: for example, the label *naming word* instead of *noun; doing word* instead of *verb.* There are a number of problems here which parallel those in our hypothetical dictatorship. Such terms have very limited potential for application, and we would soon run out of them. If an *adjective* (such as *quick*) is called a 'describing word', what are we to call an *adverb* (such as *quickly*)? And how accurate is it to call a verb a 'doing word'? *Are* is a verb in the sentence *Whales are mammals*, but it cannot with any precision of meaning be called a 'doing word'.

Some people argue that it is not necessary to use technical terms for language because we can use language efficiently without describing it in this way. It is true that people may have an excellent command of their mother tongue and know little about the analysis and labelling of the language that they speak; it is even possible to learn a foreign language without conscious recourse to such considerations. The fact remains, however, that if you wish to talk about language, you must have a vocabulary for doing so. After all, it is not inconceivable (though it does not often happen) that people might manage to repair car engines, play musical instruments or even perform an appendectomy without acquiring related technical terminology, but, in order to systematically discuss these matters, they would have to acquire or invent the appropriate language for such discussion. No one questions this obvious truth in mathematics, medicine, music or motor-vehicle maintenance; it is only in the field of language and, with rare exceptions, only in the Anglophone world, that this happens.

Language for talking about language is *metalanguage*, and it has come into existence because there is a need for it. Linguists are not unique in using metalanguage. All people talk about language with varying degrees of metalinguistic detail. When a child says that a book has a lot of long words in it, that is a metalinguistic comment. The term *word* itself is a technical term used in discussing language; it just happens to be one that most people are very familiar with. The word *greeting* is a metalinguistic term of a different kind, identifying a speech act, as are *question*, *answer*, *denial*. Such terms are accepted by the anti-terminology lobby because they are familiar and clearly useful. However, linguists need a very large technical vocabulary for language just as mechanics need a large technical vocabulary for car engines. How familiar we need to be with linguistic descriptions will vary in accordance with our professional concerns and our personal interests and motivation.

One difference between labelling parts of an internal combustion engine and labelling language items is that the former are concrete physical phenomena and the latter are not – or at least only partially so. Language form is essentially an abstraction although it is realized concretely as sounds or written symbols. Moreover, by and large, motor-car parts have one function each so that we need only one label for any individual unit. A language is vastly more complex than a car engine, and linguistic items, being multifunctional, can be looked at from more than one point of view, and hence given more than one label on different occasions even within the same analytical framework.

2.3 *Word classes*

One of the great contributions that the grammarians of ancient Greece and Rome made to our understanding of language was the development of a set of categories for classifying words. These categories came to be known in English as *parts of speech*, and traditionally eight (or sometimes nine) of these are presented as if they were a full and true account of the possible classes into which words fall. They are usually given as *noun*, *verb*, *adjective*, *adverb*, *pronoun*, *preposition*, *conjunction*, *article* and/or *interjection.*

Nowadays, among linguists the term *parts of speech* is not often used, and categories of this kind are called *word classes*. Modern linguists have raised a number of objections to the traditional classification and particularly to the criteria for assigning these labels to items, yet most of them still use all or most of these labels to indicate the word classes of lexical items. Although they serve a purpose, there is nothing sacrosanct about these labels; nor are they self-evident. Indeed, it took the ancient Greeks several centuries to work their way from two identified word classes to the eight that they ended up with, and the categories were not always the same as the ones listed above. Some of the eight are also subdivided into various subcategories.

Like traditional grammar, SFG also features eight word classes, but they are not quite the same as the traditional ones. They are *noun*, *adjective*, *numeral*, *determiner*, *verb*, *preposition*, *adverb* and *conjunction.* One way of analysing a sentence is to label each word in it according to word class. The analysis of (1) given in Fig. 2.1 reveals samples of all eight of Halliday's word classes.

(1) Soon a massive system was developed, consisting largely of numerous flood barriers, two dams and several branch canals.

Unfortunately, questions of classification rarely have an obvious or conclusive answer, and so analysts may disagree on how to classify items without anyone necessarily being wrong or, for that matter, entirely right. Hence you

noun	system, flood, barriers, dams, branch, canals
adjective	massive
numeral	numerous, two, several
determiner	a
verb	was, developed, consisting
preposition	of
adverb	soon, largely
conjunction	and

Fig. 2.1

will find considerable variation in different publications on this as on many of the issues discussed here.

2.3.1 Nouns

Some of these items can be subclassified, for example, *noun* subdivides into *common noun*, *proper noun* and *pronoun*. These have qualities in common, hence their overall classification as *noun*, but they are also grammatically distinct from each other in some respects, and so there are distinguishing labels available, too. All the nouns in (1) are common nouns, but we can find other subclasses in further examples.

(2) Wedgwood experimented ceaselessly.

In (2), *Wedgwood* belongs to a subclass of nouns known as *proper nouns*, which are traditionally described as the individual names of persons (such as *Abdullah*, *Picasso*, *Shakespeare*, *Kurosawa*), places (*Japan*, *Sydney*, *Alberta*, *South Island*), ships, trains and aeroplanes (*the Titanic*, *the Orient Express*, *Concorde*), institutions and organizations (such as *Toyota*, *the United Nations*), book and film titles (*The Godfather*) and similar categories. In English a proper noun is normally written with a capital letter. Nouns (other than pronouns) which do not fall into this class are labelled *common nouns* (for example, *ant*, *cheese*, *concept*, *donkey*, *evidence*, *faith*, *grass*). These words too have often been called 'naming words'.

Some linguists prefer to identify word classes not in such conceptual terms but rather in terms of (i) their potential for interaction with other parts of the linguistic system; and (ii) their morphology, that is, the 'shapes' they can take, their 'endings', etc. Thus a noun might be described as: (i) a linguistic item which can function as (among other things) Head of a nominal group (see Section 2.5), the nominal group being a unit which can (among other