# 2 Places where meanings hide: a more detailed look at texts and their properties

In this chapter, we take some texts and pick them apart in more detail, increasing our understanding of where certain kinds of meanings are made in those texts. We will see that there are very regular patterns—indeed, without those regular patterns reliable interpretation of what texts intend would not be possible.

"Any piece of text, long or short, will carry with it indications of its context. We only have to hear or read a section of it to know where it comes from. This means that we reconstruct from the text certain aspects of the situation, certain features of the field, the tenor and the mode. Given the text, we reconstruct the situation from it."

(Halliday and Hasan 1989: 38)

We looked at texts in the previous chapter and pointed out some assorted features that could be used to predict information about the context of production of those texts. This relies on a very tight relationship between texts and context. This connection is extremely significant and is one of the most powerful way of explaining how and why particular texts differ from one another and resemble one another. We still need to address more carefully, however, just how we know which component parts or patterns in texts are those that are responsible for 'signalling' this close relationship. If we say that a text necessarily gives cues about its origin and intended targets, then we must be able to find those cues. Providing tools to do this job is part of what linguistics does.

We therefore need to started looking at texts systematically and asking exactly in which 'bits' of language meanings hide. To do this concretely, we will again consider some rather different texts. It is often very useful to consider different kinds of texts in order to have a more concrete feeling for how language can present things in very different ways in different contexts of use and for different purposes. Looking at single texts, or types of texts, can easily mislead as we get drawn into each text's particular, apparently 'natural' construction of a world or representation or interaction.

We will see that the relationship between the fine linguistics details of texts and the particular situations of use for which those texts are appropriate is very reliable. One particular way of thinking about the situations in which texts are used that offers a quite useful 'scaffold' or framework of interpretation is one developed initially for addressing questions of **register**, or **text type**, by Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens (1964). We will see how this is part of a wider set of linguistic tools later on, but for now we can just name three basic components of register: the **field,** the **mode**, and the **tenor.** When thinking of the context of use intended for any text we can approach this systematically by asking about:

- what is the text about? what kinds of activities are being described?

- what purpose is the text serving in the situation? is it explaining, or describing, or persuading? and what form is the language being

given: is it written? is it spoken? is it being performed face-to-face or at a distance (e.g., by telephone)?

- what kinds of interpersonal relationships hold between those involved with the texts reception or production? do the speakers and hearers know each other well? are they in some kind of hierarchical social relation?

These three aspects correspond to the field, mode and tenor of a text respectively. Field is subject matter; mode is the role and manner of the text; tenor is the interpersonal relationships. If we consider any text from these three viewpoints, then we can be reasonably sure that we have already the majority of issues that will be significant when we come to try to explain and describe the text. In fact, we will see that there is a very tight match between linguistic details, the small-scale and subtle 'bits' of language used, and these rather more general issues of context and situation.

We can see this immediately with the following simple example, typical in many ways of those used as a first indication of the power of the relation between language and context, and relating in this case directly to the natural development of language by children.

| A: | Ben, hop down please. |
| | No, don't do that. |
| | You'll break the plant. |
| | Now, what did you do at kindy today? |
| B: | Played. |
| | Had a drink. |
| A: | What did you have a drink of? |
| B: | A drink of water. |
| A: | And what did you have to eat? |
| B: | Ate a 'nana. |
| A: | Don't give your sandwich to the cat. |
| | She's had her dinner. |

Even if we had not been told what particular kind of language this was, it should be fairly obvious just what the context of production of this small interaction is. For very many such texts we can state likely

contexts without, apparently, even thinking about it. This is itself a rather remarkable capability, but one which is essential to language use—without it we would not be able to make such good judgements about just what is 'appropriate' language for a given context and what not. In order to perform this feat, we can, and as linguists must, ask just *how* it is possible. What is it about the linguistic forms, the actual language 'that is there', that allows us to focus in so quickly on a likely set of contexts?

What people most often are struck by naively are the particular *words* that are used in a text. This can often give a very good cue: here, we would have words just as 'kindy' and the use of abbreviations such as "'nana" as strong indications. But even if these particularly "related to children" words are removed, we would still have identified the likely context just as quickly. And this is because almost *all* aspects of the interaction, its various 'bits', are giving us cues about the social situation and the participants in that situation. This is the central significance of register and field, mode and tenor. Because the text or interaction unfolds in a particular context, particular specifiable aspects of the language that occurs will be shaped accordingly.

When we apply our linguistic tools of looking closely at the particular linguistic features of the interaction, the grammatical structures, for example, we see that there is a rather unequal distribution of who gets to ask questions and give orders. This is usually directly associated with the tenor of the situation: with the relative or hierarchical power relationships. Clearly the young child here is not in a position of power and so gets limited options for asking and ordering. The situation is also clearly one of face-to-face interaction: which is part of the mode of the situation. For the language that occurs this means that there are immediate references to the physical context at hand: "don't do that", "the plant", etc. And the field, the particular activities that are at hand, shapes the linguistic forms to do with eating, hopping, giving, and so on.
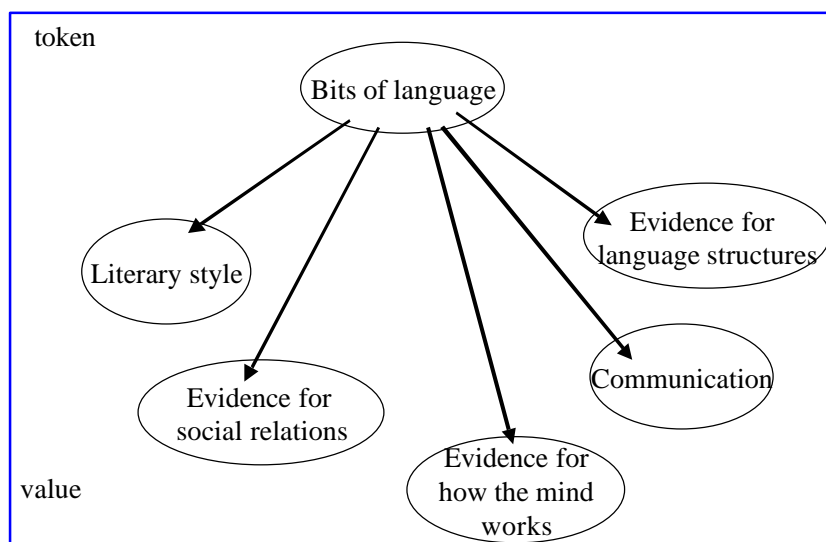
If we change the situation, however, we change the language. And vice versa: changing the language, can change the situation. Much of what we will practise will involve getting a finer and finer grip on this relationship: revealing those particular details of language, the bits of language, that carry particular cues about their contexts of use.

## 2.1 What bits of a text carry what meanings? – first steps towards text structure

By using the systematic tools of linguistics, we are trying to reduce the unbounded 'possible' interpretations of what is going on in texts, and to look more at what consequences a text has and which interpretations a text actively supports by virtue of the linguistic choices present in the text.



Given any 'bit' of language, we can naturally ask many different kinds of questions of it. We can ask about its literary style, use it for evidence of social relations, probe it for clues about how the mind works, how people communicate, or for evidence concerning the kinds of linguistic organisation that human languages employ to get their work done. Whichever we do, we are taking some particular bit of language (the 'token') and imbuing this with some additional meaning (the 'value').

When we do linguistics, that is, when we ask questions about language using the tools and methods of linguistics, we are always required to keep the *actual language that occurs* firmly in the centre of attention: if we have achieved some purpose through language then it is some properties of the language used that are responsible for this; we then try through linguistics to uncover precisely what those properties were so we can go on to ask further questions—such as, will the same properties always work, i.e., always successfully have the same results when used, or do they depend on other conditions, the social context, who is speaking, what is being spoken about, the particular placement of the language material at this point rather than that, etc.? When we loose sight of what the actual bit of language was that we are examining, then we are unlikely to find out much about how that bit of language did what it did: we will be interpreting, quite literally, an

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invention—something that may bear little relation to the original piece of language that gave rise to the behaviour or results we thought to investigate.

An important preliminary question for any further questions about language is then the following: what 'bits' of language have what effects? And how can we find out? —Just where does some particular property of a literary style live inside the language we are examining, just where is there something that provides evidence for how the mind works, or how people communicate? Unless we can focus in on the bits of language that are relevant for our questions, those questions will remain unanswered and trapped within the bounds of hypothesis, speculation, opinion and plain guessing.

We will now turn to our more focused examples to show some particular places that particular kinds of meaning surface.

## 2.2   Textual organisation and grammar

To make it clear that these places where meanings hide are not fixed and obvious, but instead are dependent on the particular language, we first consider a pair of contrasting texts in German and English within the same text type, that of the short author biography.

A. Margriet de Moor, Jahrgang 1941, studierte in Den Haag Gesang und Klavier. Sie machte Karriere als Sängerin, besonders mit Liedern des 20. Jahrhunderts. Kunstgeschichts- und Architekturstudium in Amsterdam. Mit ihren beiden Erzählungsbänden *Rückenansicht* (1988) und *Doppelporträt* (1989) machte sie zum ersten Mal als Schriftstellerin von sich reden. Es folgte der Roman *Erst grau dann weiß dann blau* (1991), für den sie 1992 eine der wichtigsten literarischen Auszeichnungen in den Niederlanden erhielt. 1993 erschien ihr zweiter Roman *Der Virtuose.*

B. Carol Shields was born and raised in Chicago and has lived in Canada since 1957. She studied at Hanover College and the University of Ottawa. Author of six novels, including *The Republic of Love*, which was shortlisted for the 1992 Guardian Fiction Prize, and *The Stone Diaries*, which was shortlisted for the 1993 Booker Prize. Carol Shields has also

written three volumes of poetry and numerous short stories. She now lives in Winnipeg and spends each summer in France.

We can begin to see differences between texts that are systematic for their respective languages if we know where to look.

One position that is very loaded in English is 'the front of the sentence'. This position is linguistically significant in a way that other positions—such as 'the first word of the sentence' or 'the 27th. letter of the sentence' are not; it would make no sense to look at these latter parts of the sentence to see what was happening there—there is nothing systematic about what languages do with these positions and so one would fine a more or less random collection of linguistic material. The first position in the sentence is very different: this is used systematically. And, again, finding out which positions are used systematically and which not is part of the job of linguistics: finding out *where it makes sense to look for meaning.*

Dividing text A according to its first elements looks as shown on the next page. The red line running down the text marks off the 'first' elements from the rest. We see a range of elements to the left of the line, and which are therefore at the 'front' of their respective sentences. We have the name of the author, a pronominal reference to her, her areas of study presented simply as a nominal phrase (-*studium*), an empty pronoun 'Es' followed by a relative clause introducing prepositional phrase 'für den', and finally a year '1993'. This is quite normal (and systematic) for texts of this kind in German.

But it is not normal and systematic for all languages. If we provide a similar diagram for the English biography given in Text B (also shown on the next page), we have a different picture. Again, just focusing on the elements to the left of the line we have the following: the name of the author, the conjunction 'and' linking two statements together, a pronominal reference to the author, another description of the author ('Author of six novels'), her name again, another pronominal reference, and a final conjunction 'and'.

# Biography (English):
## 'first' elements

Carol Shields **was born and raised** in Chicago

**and has lived** in Canada since 1957.

She **studied** at Hanover College and the University of Ottawa.

Author of six novels, including *The Republic of Love*, which was shortlisted for the 1992 Guardian Fiction Prize, and *The Stone Diaries*, which was shortlisted for the 1993 Booker Prize.

Carol Shields **has** also **written** three volumes of poetry and numerous short stories.

She now **lives** in Winnipeg

**and spends** each summer in France.

# Biography (German):
## 'first' elements

Margriet de Moor, Jahrgang 1941 **studierte in Den Haag Gesang und Klavier.**

**Sie machte Karriere als Sängerin, besonders mit Liedern des 20. Jahrhunderts.**

*Kunstgeschichts- und Architekturstudium in Amsterdam.*

**Mit ihren beiden Erzählungsbänden** *Rückenansicht* **(1988) und** *Doppelporträt* **(1989) machte sie zum ersten Mal als Schriftstellerin von sich reden.**

**Es folgte der Roman** *Erst grau dann weiß dann blau* **(1991),**

**für den sie 1992 eine der wichtigsten literarischen Auszeichnungen in den Niederlanden erhielt.**

**1993 erschien ihr zweiter Roman** *Der Virtuose***.**

If we examined these texts in isolation, without thinking systematically, we might dismiss these selections on the left hand side of the red line as an accident of how the respective writers of these biographies selected to phrase their biographies and not to pay it any further attention. This would be incorrect. The respective properties of the English and German texts are in fact systematically related to how texts are structured in English and German: the first position in the sentence (more accurately, the 'clause'—which we will define below) is used to express particular meanings to do with how particular text genres structure their texts. And this is different in the two languages. The range of things that can appear in first position in German biographies (and many other genres) is far broader than the range of things that can appear in the corresponding genres in English.

We can show this clearly by considering the following text. It is a text written by a German student as a translation of a German biography.

> In 1930 Janina David was born in Poland, the only child of a middle class Jewish family. She lost her parents during the war and left, after being rescued from the Ghetto in 1946, Poland. Two years she spent in an orphanage in Paris and emigrated then, shortly before her 18th. birthday, to Australia. She was granted Australian citizenship, worked in factories and received a scholarship to study arts and social sciences at the University of Melbourne. 1958 she returned to France. Now she lives in London.

If you think that this text reads rather poorly, you would be correct. There are a number of phrasing problems that could be corrected. However, no matter how many of these minor problems are cleared up, one big one would remain: it has the wrong kinds of elements in first position in its sentences. The range of elements selected: a date, a pronominal reference to the author, a length of time ('two years'), a further pronominal reference, and a further date is exactly the range seen above in the German text. It is not the range that is found in English texts of this kind and so it remains 'non-English'. Even speakers of English may not themselves be able to put their fingers immediately on why it seems disfluent and may well make non-systematic suggestions for its improvement. But without correcting the range of elements that appears in the first position of its sentences, the text will remain awkward.

Examining a broader range of biographies in English and German will confirm that the selection of first element in a sentence is not something that can be left to the individual whims or style of a writer/speaker but is something that is strictly controlled by the language.

This does not apply only to biographies. Consider the following news article in its original form in German.

> Ferch - einen offenbar geistig verwirrten Mann hat die Polizei nach einer mehrtägigen Suche wohlbehalten aufgegriffen. Das Auto des 85jährigen aus Mönchengladbach war bereits in der Nacht zu Montag bei Ferch (Potsdam-Mittelmark) leer aufgefunden worden. Mit einem Polizeihubschrauber wurde den ganzen Montag das Gebiet abgesucht. Gestern morgen fanden die Beamten den Mann, bekleidet mit Oberhemd und Unterhose. Der entkräftete Rentner kam ins Krankenhaus.

A student translation of this text into English is the following, with the textually significant 'first' elements of the clauses now underlined for you:

> After a search lasting several days, the police have found an obviously mentally confused man alive and well. The car of the 85-year-old man from Mönchen-Gladbach had been found empty already in the night to Monday near Ferch (Potsdam-Mittelmark). With a police helicopter, the area was searched all day Monday. Yesterday morning police officers found the man dressed in a shirt and underpants. The exhausted old-aged pensioner was taken to hospital.

Again you should see here some substantial problems—and many of these problems stem from the fact that the selections at the beginning of each sentence are still very much in the German pattern rather than the English pattern for this type of text; we will return to this and the previous example in order to describe more exactly what is wrong with these selections below.

As some final examples of what happens when this goes wrong, and to show that this is not restricted to mistakes by learners, we can consider the English translations for the following German sentences found on the display board at the end of each carriage in German Inter-City-Express trains:

| | |
|---|---|
| Im ICE sind Sie jederzeit erreichbar: ...<br><br>Eine vollständige Liste der ICE-Telefonnummern finden Sie in der Broschüre "Audio-Video-Programme" an Ihrem Sitzplatz.<br><br>Bildschirme für das ICE-Videoprogramm finden Sie in der Rückenlehne aller Reihensitze der 1. Klasse. | At all seats you can listen to 3 ICE Programmes (classical, pop, fairy tales) over the headphones.<br><br>Screens to watch the ICE video programme you will find in the backrests of the seats in the first class coaches. |

These English translations preserve the selections for the first elements in their clauses found in the German:

**At all seats** you can listen to 3 ICE Programmes (classical, pop, fairy tales) over the headphones.

**Screens to watch the ICE video programme** you will find in the backrests of the seats in the first class coaches.

And for this reason the translations are quite poor: technically, their *grammatical Themes* are inappropriate. English and German use the first position in a sentence for a particular kind of meaning—a meaning that is used to structure texts: this position cannot therefore be abused for reasons of supposed 'emphasis' or 'importance'. [2]

How this works is that typically readers/hearers are given particular *signposts* during a text as to how they are to interpret the text: and these signposts have to be in places that a reader/hearer can readily identify. There are two main concerns: (a) telling the reader/hearer how the text is being constructed, and the speaker/writer is organising his or her text; and (b) telling the reader/hearer what things in a text are new or newsworthy and which are to be taken as 'known', 'old' or 'non-controversial'. These two kinds of meaning are present in every sentence. They are expressed in similar ways: namely by a **pulse** of textual information that is sent out like light from a lighthouse. These

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[2] Interestingly, these messages seem to have been gradually improved over the past few years; but some problems still remain with the theme choices. It is clear that the improvements are not being made with any systematic understanding of the problems involved. This also serves to show us that linguistic data are everywhere!

pulses occur in a regular rhythm, just as those from a lighthouse. The first pulse occurs at the beginning of a sentence, the second at the end.

These 'textual pulses' differ from those from a lighthouse in one respect. The one at the beginning of the sentence starts suddenly and fades slowly, while the one at the end of the sentence starts gradually and then stops suddenly. We call the first pulse the **thematic** pulse: it concerns the *thematic organisation* of the text. We call the second pulse the **news** pulse: it concerns the most salient, newsworthy piece of information in the sentence. We therefore have two general 'movements' in the sentence: one from the beginning of the sentence, involving decreasing thematicity, and one moving towards the end of the sentence, involving increasing 'news value'. These movements are indicated graphically as follows:



(with a finite verb)
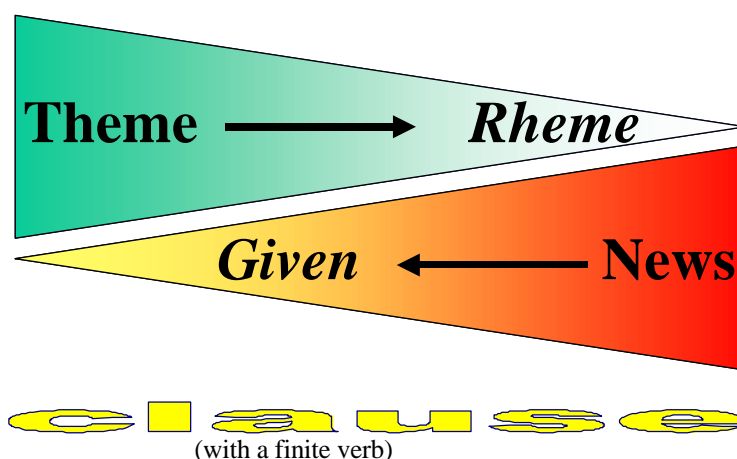
The strongest part of the thematic pulse is called the grammatical **Theme**: this pulse quickly becomes weaker so that by the time we reach the finite verb of the sentence (at the latest!) we are in the non-thematic part of the sentence, or **Rheme.** Depending on the particular form a sentence takes, the theme may be exhausted earlier than the finite verb—to say exactly where it runs out will require us to to know more about the constituency structure of sentences, to which we will return at length below. The strongest part of the news pulse is called the **News:** the increase from established **Given** information to the News can be much more gradual than the case with theme and can stretch over quite long parts of the sentence.

Quite difference 'linguistic resources' or material are employed in English for showing where a reader or hearer how these two pulses of textual organisation spread themselves over the sentence. Whereas in

English the thematic pulse is regularly associated with the front of the sentence as we have seen, the news pulse is not strictly associated with a position in the sentence at all: it is instead associated with the place in the sentence that is pronounced with the *strongest intonational prominence*—this means the part of the sentence which is said most loudly or with the greatest change in intonation. This can in principle occur anywhere in the sentence (even at the beginning!).

The difference this makes to meaning is, generally, very clear. Thus, if we represent the News pulse with capital letters as is often done, we can see the difference quite readily between the following two utterances:

- Please give the BOOK to Mary.

- Please give the book to MARY.

Note that it is *not* enough here to talk blandly of 'emphasising' what we want to consider 'important': these intonational prominence has a specific effect. Placing intonational prominence on something else in the sentence is not a free speaker choice depending on what that speaker considers important—it commits instead to different *textual meaning* and can only be used in particular appropriate contexts. We can make the difference very clear by considering in which situations these two sentences above would be said: the first would only be used in a context where it is clear that we are going to give something to Mary (i.e., this is Given), but we need to say what it is that we are going to give (i.e., this is News); the second would only be used in a situation where it is not clear that Mary is going to receive anything and so this information is News. These situations are not identical and so the particular forms of the utterances are not interchangeable: each one is only appropriate for its own context. Note also though that in both cases we have the *same* elements at the beginning of the sentences—which means that the Theme choices have not changed.

It is particularly the case in usual written language (i.e., written language that has not been extended artificially by adding capitals letters or something similr as we have just done above), we can speak most reliably of the tendency for the strongest part of the news pulse to come at the 'end' of the sentence. This is because in written language  the option of intonational prominence is not available. But

even here we can structure sentences, i.e., use particular grammatical constructions, so that they are difficult to read with the neutral sentence-final stress. Examples are sentences such as:

It was Mary who I wanted to give the book to.

When this occurs, we are also moving the point of news prominence away from the end of the sentence. In such situations, the rest of the sentence that follows the main point of the news is strongly indicated as 'given', 'established', 'non-controversial' information. It is as if once the news pulse has been given, there is no 'news' energy left in the sentence and we must wait for the next sentence before a new pulse occurs. So in terms of the news pulse and the places of new and given information the above sentence could be represented thus:



It was Mary who I wanted to give the book to.
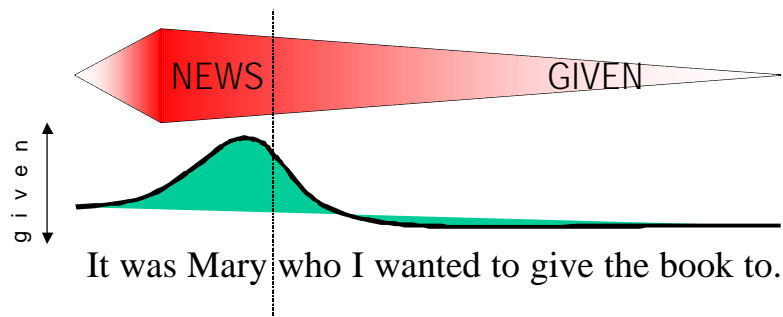
As we can see, in English there is a close relationship between the 'intonational contour' and the status of the message as 'news'; this does not have to be the case, however, and there are languages which organise things quite differently.

Returning now to the thematic pulse and grammatical Theme, an open question that we have raised in passing but have not yet considered properly is just what it means to be in the "first" position in a sentence: where this starts is (usually!) fairly obvious, but where does it end? That is to say, how can we know where to say that the first position (and thus the Theme) has ended? We will need to clarify this considerably, but for now we can note that this is another question for which linguistics should provide an answer. The first position is not something arbitrary: what we consider to be the first position should correspond to that part of the sentence that does some particular linguistic work—in this case, a bit of the sentence that is particularly significant for how texts are structured. This is an *empirical* issue, that is, one that is to be settled by examining how real texts are actually

structured and how they use the available linguistic resources of the language to achieve this structuring.

For now, we should now have got a sense of the role of theme and the thematic pulse for individual sentences within individual texts, and we have seen how these choices differ for English and German. Later on we will return to see some of the effects of these choices for larger-scale texts. It is only then that we can most convincingly answer the question as to why it is in fact necessary to single out the first position of sentences as one of those special 'bits' of language to which we must attend.

## 2.3   Negotiating social relationships with grammar

The first position in a sentence (or, more accurately, a 'clause') is not the only position which carries a particular kind of meaning; it is actually practically the simplest to find—most linguistically significant places for looking for meaning require us to do a bit more work to find them. As noted above, even identifying the 'first' position will need to be made more precise (i.e., first letter?, first word?, first 'chunk'?)—many of the other positions of importance within texts and sentences cannot even be talked about without introducing some more linguistic vocabulary.

The following text is taken from the recording of a radio programme: the radio programme is being made on the forecourt of a petrol filling station, the radio programme presenter, Max, is stopping people at the filling station in order to ask them questions for his show. He has just finished asking questions of a man, Sid, and is about to ask questions of a woman.

| | |
|---|---|
| MAX | A couple of questions very easy to answer for a radio programme we're doing. The first of the questions is *What* would you say language is? |
| WOMAN | Language ... well it's the dialogue that people speak within various countries. |
| MAX | Fair enough aaand *what* would you say it's *made* out of? |
| WOMAN | (*Pause, 8 seconds*) It's made out of (*puzzled intonation*) |

| | |
|---|---|
| MAX | Hmmm. |
| WOMAN | Well I don't know you'd tell what it's *made* out of ... It's a person's *expression* I suppose is it? |
| MAX | I haven't got the answers, I've only got the questions (*laughing*) |
| WOMAN | (*simultaneously: small laugh*) |
| SID | That's not *bad* though. |
| WOMAN | Well it's an *expression,* it would be a person's *expression* wouldn't it? |
| SID | That's a good answer. |
| MAX | Thank you very much |

This interaction does not go very smoothly. In his first response to the woman's answer, Max already indicates by several linguistic means that this was perhaps not quite the answer that he was looking for: both the 'fair enough' and the drawn out 'aaand' signal this. From this point on, the woman's answers become increasingly uncertain. Throughout the interaction, the language selected is managing a complex and changing configuration of *social roles,* and these are strongly indicated by particular places in the sentences used since they are *not* being simply guessed at or communicated by telepathy!

The first question that Max puts is a request for information, but he does not simply say:

"Tell me what language is!"

or

"What is language?"

Instead he used the much more complex form:

"what would you say language is?"

A consideration of what *could have* been said but wasn't often helps place the meanings of what actually *was* said in a clearer perspective. We can expand on this last form here in a number of ways; for example, we could explain it as a shorthand form of some statement such as:

- "(If I were to ask you what is language, then) "what **would you say** language is?"

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- "(I might not even ask (because I cannot presume to impose) ... and even if I were to ask, you might either not answer, or answer only hypothetically) ... "what *would you say* language is?"
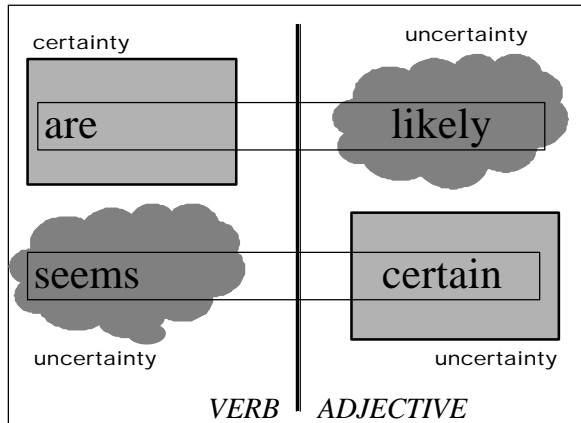
These forms are often recognised as 'having something to do with politeness'. But politeness does not happen in a vacuum, and the forms used here in fact go considerably further than merely signalling that the speaker is being polite. The motivation for the expansion here is to be found in the precise social roles being enacted: this is not a neutral, 'unembodied' seeking of information—no interaction is. What we have here is an example of language enacting *gendered roles,* and particularly some role combination such as *middle-aged to elderly* and *middle-class to middle-class.*

Meanings of this kind are also found in particular places in the sentences that are used: not, however, in one simple place such as the beginning of the sentence, but in a number of rather more complex positions. One such position is around the main verb of the sentence: the bit of the sentence that expresses the tense selected. This is because this part of the sentence not only expresses tense, it also expresses certainty—and certainty is precisely the commodity that is traded in when delicate social relations are at issue.

We can see this in another pair of sentences that are taken, slightly adapted, from a pair of long newspaper articles that we will return to in later in the course. These sentences, each taken from the beginning of their respective articles, are describing the same state of affairs.

| Telecom employees are likely to strike within a week | Industrial action seems certain to hit the nation's telecommunications network from early next week |
|---|---|

Here again, the expression of certainty is the meaning that is being packaged rather differently in the two news reports—and where that packaging is occurring is around the main verb. In the first text, we see certainty about an uncertainty 'are [certain] likely [uncertain]', whereas in the second text we see uncertainty about a certainty 'seems [uncertain] certain [certainty]'. Just as we saw with the selections of first element in sentences, and even more with the presence or absence or humans in the definitions of linguistics, these selections are rarely

certainty          uncertainty

**are**          **likely**

**seems**          **certain**

uncertainty          uncertainty

*VERB*    *ADJECTIVE*

random: the two texts take very different orientations to the news being reported and this difference appears in different meanings that are made in a variety of different places in the corresponding texts. In this way, the collections of 'theoretically' independent choices made in a text tend in fact to point in particular directions in a coherent and organised fashion. Texts thus go a long way to supporting particular lines of interpretation while cutting off others. But, again, without some fairly sophisticated tools for knowing where to look for the differences, the precise import of different choices can easily be missed.

Another place to look for meanings to do with the social interaction is at the end of sentences in a dialogue. For example, it is here that we find in the contributions of the woman (and only of the woman) the forms:

It's a person's *expression* <u>I suppose is it?</u>

Well it's an *expression,* it would be a person's *expression,* <u>wouldn't it?</u>

These so-called 'tag' questions (and not only tagged, but also *modalised*—'suppose', 'would') are again clear places where a meaning of increasing uncertainty is being expressed.

Further evidence for the gender differences in the linguistic choices being made can be found when we compare how Max phrased his opening question to the woman with how he phrased it to Sid, the previous victim. For the woman the question takes the form "... questions very easy to answer..." whereas previously to Sid the phrasing was: "Two questions that you can answer briefly..." These can be contrasted as follows:

• to Sid: "briefly" [i.e., you are likely to be busy, to have things to do, but you can answer  this briefly]

• to woman: "...easy..." [i.e., you are likely to be nervous, not used to dealing with definitions, but this is easy (even) for you]

Choices such as this are being taken and enacted *in every interaction.* Each choice might again, as with the selection of what comes first in a sentence, look like stylistic or individual variation on the part of speakers/writers without any further particular consequences or reason. But when choices are made in systematic ways repeatedly across a text, across a collection of texts, or across the style of discourse of an entire group of the population, these choices are no longer 'individual' and take on a far broader significance. Again, it is the job of linguistics to reveal this significance.

The choices that are made around the main verb extend to include one further extremely significant choice in English: the selection of grammatical Subject. English and German are very different in the role that this grammatical function plays—that is, the meanings of grammatical Subject in English and in German are very different, they are used for different reasons. This developed over a long period and coincides with one of the main typological differences between modern English and German. Consider the following sentences and how you would most naturally say them in German:

- This hotel forbids dogs.
- She wants to be forgiven.
- Everything in and about the house would be taken such excellent care of! (Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, Chapter III, 1818)

If you have problems, or are led to produce sentences with rather different structures, then this is a direct consequence of the fact that the grammatical Subject in English and that in German have long gone their separate ways. And, again, as repeatedly emphasised: this is a *systematic* and *reoccurring* property of the two linguistic systems involved. We are not concerned with idiosyncratic exceptions here.

To talk about these issues more easily, we will give them some names: the part of the main verb that is particularly concerned with expressing tense and time will be called the **Finite** part of the verb (to be thought of in contrast to 'infinitives', which are often (incorrectly) thought of as not carrying tense information). The combination of the Subject and the Finite elements in a sentence will be called the **Mood** of the sentence. The Mood part of a sentence is particularly important for interaction and dialogue—indeed, as the following example shows,

English scarcely needs anything else in order for interaction to proceed!

| | |
|---|---|
| John: | Where **did you** get that Mars bar? |
| James: | **Bill gave** it to me at lunch time. |
| John: | No **he didn't**. |
| James: | Yes **he did**. |
| John: | **He did not.** |
| James: | **Did!** |
| John: | **Did not**. |
| | **I saw** you take it from Mom's secret hiding place. |
| James: | **You did not**. |
| John: | Yes **I did**. |
| James: | **It's** mine anyway. |
| John: | **I want** one too. [crying] |
| Mum: | **What's** all this noise about? If **you can't** play outside without fighting **come** inside and **do** your homework. |

This is a simple children's dialogue in fact written by a child. It shows that the basic function of the Mood element in English is understood very early. If we highlight the Mood elements in this dialogue as shown below, then we can get a good sense of what Mood does in English. The selections in the Mood element carry the interactional force of a message: whether it is making a question, a statement, or giving orders. This is signalled simply by the relative order of the Subject element and the Finite element. Changing this order changes the 'communicative force' of the utterance. Because the Mood element is the centre of interactional action, it is then not surprising that it is often possible to omit all other information. There are two segments in this dialogue where the interaction degenerates to a simple sequence of rejecting what was said before: this interactional work can be done by the Mood element alone.

When language becomes more sophisticated and moves into adult usage, the Mood element also becomes more complex. But its basic function of signalling the interactional status of its message remains. In the following interaction we again have a very clear use of the Mood element for managing the interactional roles being taken up by the dialogue participants.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Speaker 1* | And then at that time did you give him the gun? |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Speaker 2* | It was probably about that time. | |
| *Speaker 1* | Did you have at that time some talk about the incident? | |
| *Speaker 2* | I did. | |
| *Speaker 1* | And at that time, was the man R still in the back room? | |
| *Speaker 2* | Yes, I think he was. | |
| *Speaker 1* | Perhaps I should ask you as a matter of finality, were you in the lounge room when Mr. R was escorted through the house? | |
| *Speaker 2* | No sir, I don't think so, no. | |

The diagram to the right below again picks up the Mood selections that have been made in this dialogue. In addition to the basic ordering between Subject and Finite that signals whether a question is being made or not, we also see additional elements that are typically considered part of the Mood element: these are indications of certainty as we also saw in our radio text above; here: 'probably', 'I think', 'perhaps', 'think so'. This is the main way in which adult language is

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Speaker 1* | **did** you | Q |
| *Speaker 2* | It **was** *probably* | ■ |
| *Speaker 1* | **Did** you | Q |
| *Speaker 2* | I **did**. | |
| *Speaker 1* | **was** the man R | Q |
| *Speaker 2* | *I think* he **was** | ■ |
| *Speaker 1* | *Perhaps* I **should** | ■ |
| | **were** you | Q |
| *Speaker 2* | I **don't** *think so* | ■ |

more developed in the Mood area than children's language: there are far more possibilities present than a simple 'yes' and 'no': the space between these can be drawn out almost indefinitely far. This is part of a relatively recent area of linguistics to be developed, and goes under the names of **appraisal, evaluation** or **authorial stance.**

## 2.4   Basic activities: processes, participants and circumstances

The kinds of meanings that we have seen in the previous examples are different to what is generally considered to be *the* meaning of a text or sentence. When people are asked about meaning, they often first respond with something like the story that a text tells: who did what, when, to whom, etc. Here we will take this notion apart a bit further—systematically of course—and see that even here there are additional meanings that are being made by any text. These additional meanings revolve around the choices of *how* activities are being presented and

*just what information is included and what not.* The first detailed division that we will consider is the following. Any event can be broken down into three components:

- the **Process**: what is happening, what is going on, ...

- the **Participants**: who or what is directly 'participating' in what is going on,

- the **Circumstances**: where, when, why, etc. the event is happening, going on, etc.

These three components are the means that language itself provides for breaking up an event and talking. We will see that this is a structure that most, if not all, languages of the world impose *grammatically* on what their speakers talk about. The Process is in many ways the most important member: without something going on there is nothing to say; but most Processes require Participants in order to occur at all, so Participants are also quite important. Circumstances are, however, by definition peripheral; they are not essential to an understanding of what is going on, they provide additional framing of the event under discussion.

A simple example of this decomposition of a sentence is the following. Already it should be clear that it is not possible to state for any event in the world that such-and-such an entity *must* be the Participant and something else *must* be a Circumstance: these choices will be made by the speaker/writer and will themselves therefore provide an additional layer of meaning to the created text. But we cannot describe, or rather language does not let us describe, an event without decomposing it into some process and some participants. Different languages might do this in different ways, but we, as language users, are always forced to break up the continual and continuous flow of experience into this process+participant form when we want to communicate it.

This is made particularly clear in the following quotation from Halliday (1985:101-2):

"Imagine that we are out in the open air and that there is movement overhead. Perceptually the phenomenon is all of a piece; but when we talk about it we analyse it as a semantic configuration— something which we express as, say, *birds are flying in the sky.*

This is not the only possible way of organizing such a fragment of experience; we might have turned it into a meaning structure— 'semanticized it', so to speak—quite differently. We might have said something like *it's winging*; after all, we say *it's raining*..."

And, as Halliday in another work goes on to illustrate, there is quite a lot of variation across languages here too; considering the following different ways of 'semanticizing' situations of raining:

So this way of viewing the work that language does for us in interpreting the world is very important. Moreover, it does not vary only across languages—we use it very flexible for particular kinds of meanings also *within* any language. The examples in this section will show this for English.

To begin, then, the three-way decomposition of an event is illustrated graphically in the diagram on the right. In this graphical representation consisting, again, of circles within circles,
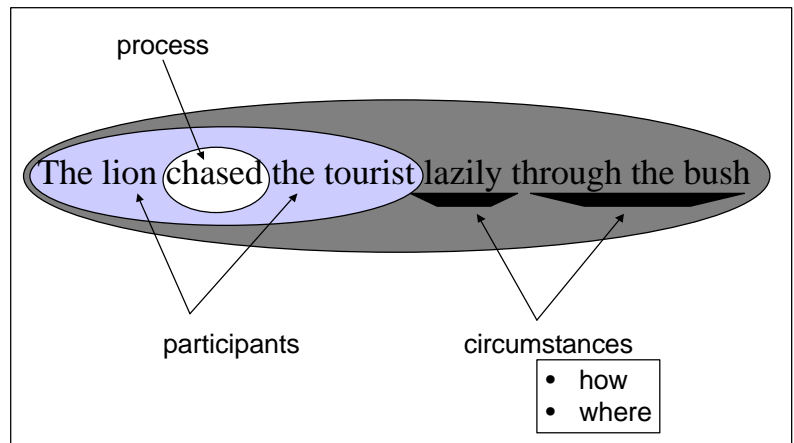


we see the Process, 'chasing', clearly placed at the centre. This means that what is going on is a 'chasing' of some kind: or rather, that whatever is going on is going to be presented, or *construed*, as a chasing. Once this has been decided, however, there must also be some participants: without Participants, there could be no chasing, here we have two, a 'chaser' (the lion) and a 'chased' (the tourist).
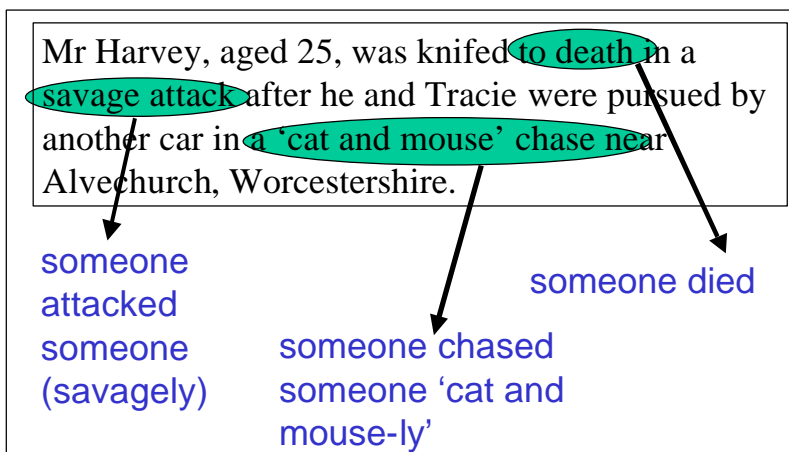
With just this information we have sufficient information to know what kind of event is at issue. But we can also provide additional circumstantial information, such as where (through the bush), when or how (lazily) the chase is proceeding. As we can also see here, it is not necessary to have every kind of Circumstance possible: they are generally quite optional.

We can go a long way to recognising Processes, Participants and Circumstances in a text even without further linguistic apparatus. But, as we shall below, there will be cases where, with the description given so far, we might not be sure whether we have an event to be described in these terms or not. This is because all languages provide a variety of different ways of expressing events, and not all of these appear as combinations of Processes, Participants and Circumstances. One way of at least getting started is to consider the kind of *linguistic unit* being discussed: Process, Participants and Circumstances in fact only apply to one kind of linguistic unit: the grammatical object called the **clause.** There are then many opportunities for expressing in texts various happenings, but not all these choose to present them as events (which is itself, as we shall now see, itself an extra meaning).

Some examples of this variety of packaging from a newspaper text that we will use again below can be seen in the following sentence.

Mr Harvey, aged 25, was knifed to death in a savage attack after he and Tracie were pursued by another car in a 'cat and mouse' chase near Alvechurch, Worcestershire.

In this sentence there are rather more candidates for 'events' than can (or need) to be described in terms of Processes, Participants and Circumstances. In particular, from this sentence we know that previously Harvey had been involved in a 'savage attack'—surely some kind of event—and that there was a 'cat and mouse' chase—also some kind of event. Going further, we could also say that since Harvey died in the attack, there is the further event of a death.



What is then significant for us here is the fact that these events *have not been presented as such* in the text. Both the attack and the chase appear here as 'objects'—an attack, a chase—just as linguistics can be presented as an object as we shall in a moment. Clearly, this is not something that corresponds to any reality in the world: the selection of how to express particular events is a decision of the speaker/writer.

But, as always, consequences follow from these decisions. If something is presented as an object, then it cannot be questioned—it is not something that the speaker introduces as a new part of the story and it does not enter into the Mood structure introduced in the previous section; it is part of the props, the background objects around which new events are constructed. And this is, indeed, one of the major motivations for presenting events as objects: they are 'old', non-negotiable pieces of information. They are removed from the timeline of the narrative-in-progress. It is only when an event is presented linguistically as a clause, with its constituting Process, Participant, Circumstance configuration that it is, linguistically speaking, presented as an event.

It is worth noting that this is not only a 'negative' decision: choosing to present an event as an object itself opens up several new possibilities that are not available when it appears as a clause: for example, consider how we might express the classification 'cat and mouse chase'. Objects can (in English and German) be classified and broken up into ever finer classes and subclasses. Thus we have a particular kind 'chasing' event, one with some element of teasing and cruelty. Clauses do not support this kind of progressive subclassification—we would need to resort to the rather clumsy 'they were chased in a manner similar to that employed by cats with mice' or something similarly unwieldy.

This situation opens up several problems—for example, because we can no longer rely purely on our naive understanding of what an event is, we need to look to see how it is being expressed in a text. This requires that we develop further ways of being sure that a text is using a clause rather than some description of an object. Wanting to recognise clauses so that we can in turn look at the Processes, Participants and Circumstances means that we need to know just what is a clause and what is not. This is not possible without further linguistic constructs and so we will turn to this in detail later. To finish off this chapter first, though, we will provide some further examples both of the kinds of meanings that find their way into Processes, Participants and Circumstances and of the consequences of these selections for texts as a whole. Just as we have seen for the first position in the sentence, and the position around the main verb, the

'positions' defined by Process, Participants and Circumstances are used for very specific purposes.

The kind of analysis performed when we set out the Process, Participants and Circumstances in a text is called **transitivity** analysis in several linguistic traditions; other names for related but differing perspectives on the clause include **thematic roles**, **case roles** and **semantic roles.** We will see later on how important it is to keep perspectives apart—an example of the confusion that can otherwise arise is already with us, since above we talked about *theme* in quite a different sense. Terms or not used without a context: particular linguistic terms are no exception. Each belongs to a 'discourse' that has its own history and development, and learning about these different lines of development in the history of linguistics is an important and valuable part of learning about linguistics. We can rarely just 'swap' terms from one discourse into another, so it is necessary to be particularly on your guard for this: especially when reading materials that come from different traditions (as many of the selections in the course reader do!). To make sense of the alternatives and to keep them safely apart, one needs to have an overall 'map' of what linguistics: we will start introducing such maps later on, once some of the options have been set out in isolation and you have gained an impression of the kinds of approaches and phenomena addressed.

Returning to our transitivity analysis here, we have again a good example of how a particular kind of linguistic analysis tells us in detail about particular aspects of the situations in which the analysed texts occur. By examining carefully what has been presented as Processes, Participants and Circumstances and what has not, we can often learn considerably more about how the text is creating a particular view of the world: it is precisely because of the fact that speakers/writers *select* what they want to appear as Participants and Circumstances makes this selection interesting for texts. As Butt *et al.* phrase it:

> "In other words, the packaging expressed through the clause is part of the way in which we represent or model what is going on, what is at stake, what we take to be reality." (Butt *et al.*, 2003:60)

Any time that a choice can be made, then there are meanings that are being made with that choice. Being able to recognise Processes, Participants and Circumstances opens up for our inspection a far

broader range of positions where meanings are being made than the positions we have seen previously.

## 2.4.1 Taking information out

As an example, we will first examine another simple example of information being 'hidden'. The text (shown on the next page) is another rather simple piece of news writing, describing a state of affairs causing some concern to a local council. To carry out the analysis, we need simply to look at what kinds of things are used as Participants and what kinds of things appear as Circumstances. This will generally tell us a surprising amount about the organisation of a text and its particular meaning—in particular, the 'world' that the text accordingly brings into existence.

The article starts:

> Unsheeted lorries from Middlebarrow were still causing problems by shedding stones on their journey through Warton village.

This is quite a complicated sentence as it chooses to have rather complex Participants and Circumstances. The first step in taking the sentences of a text apart is always to look for the Process, the main event (or state) that is being described. We must always find the Process first because it is only through the Process that the Participants and Circumstances have any meaning. That is, the Participants are participants *in the particular* Process that we find, and the Circumstances are the *particular circumstances in which that Process occurs.* The Process in this first sentence is carried by the words 'were ... causing': i.e., something was causing something.

We can then fill in the Participants by asking what was causing what. This uses a trick that we will develop substantially later on: by asking particular

# Quarry load-shedding problem

UNSHEETED lorries from Middlebarrow Quarry were still causing problems by shedding stones on their journey through Warton village, members of the parish council heard at their September meeting.

The council's observations have been sent to the quarry management and members are hoping to see an improvement.

kinds of questions, we can often make a linguistic structure tell us about its own organisation. That is because the question picks out particular aspects of that organisation, which we already implicitly understand, in a way that we can readily see. Such questions are called **probes.** The probe questions and answers relevant here are:

| Probe question | Participant |
|---|---|
| what was causing something? | Unsheeted lorries from Middlebarrow |
| what was being caused? | problems |

We then go on and look for Circumstances—i.e., bits of the sentence that tell us more about the circumstances in which this particular event of causing was occurring. As indicated above, these are answers to probe questions concerned with 'when', 'where', 'how', etc. They are further indicated when we can leave them out of the sentence without making the sentence ungrammatical.

There are two Circumstances in this example sentence, as indicated by the following questions and answers:

| Probe question | Circumstance |
|---|---|
| when was something causing something? | still |
| how was something (the problem) being caused? | by shedding stones on their journey through Warton village. |

This example also shows us one of the things that makes recognising Participants and Circumstances more difficult: sometimes they can have descriptions of *other* events inside them. Thus the 'how'-Circumstance here is itself an event, the event of shedding stones. Also, as typically the case when we have such 'dependent' events, we do not need to make all of their Participants and Circumstances fully explicit if this would mean repeating information already given. Thus one of the Participants of this dependent event has been omitted—the 'shedders' of the stones have been left out because it is obvious that these are the same ones as are 'causing the problems'. We will return to this using of events within other events when we discuss linguistic
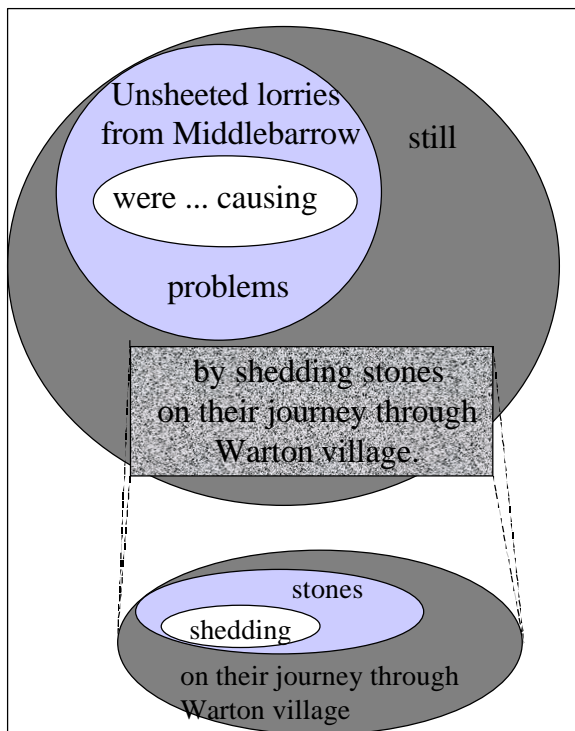
*structure* in more detail. For the moment we can see that we have the kind of structure shown on the left.

There are further complexities here and we will see later on this course that we can take this sentence apart into considerably more significant parts, all of which carry some aspect of the complete sentence's meaning.

What we focus on here is asking what kinds of objects, what kinds of entities, are selected by the writer of the article to be the Participants. And here we have the clear selection of an explicit cause of the problem discussed: 'unsheeted lorries from Middlebarrow'. It is therefore not explicitly stated that any particular person or people are to blame, the causers of the problems are the lorries and the fact of their being unsheeted (that is, they do not have a tarpaulin over their load to prevent odd bits and pieces from falling off during their journey). These particular causers of a problem are also maintained in the Circumstance: not only do these lorries cause problems, they also shed stones—again there are no signs of individuals who might be responsible for this state of affairs. The closest to some kind of explicit attribution of responsibility comes later in the article, where we are informed that the 'management' of the quarry has been informed. Such avoidance of, or its opposite, direct attribution of, authority is very common in news articles and is employed for a variety of reasons—these reasons range from avoiding law suites, to deliberately pointing at particular individuals or groups as being responsible, to bad writing—where some kind of 'newspaper-ese' is adopted in the misguided belief that this is 'how one writes news paper articles'. It is generally entertaining to go through several news articles and examine just where responsibility is being attributed and where it is being withheld.

## 2.4.2 An analysis of definitions of linguistics

As a final example of using this kind of tool, we will look at some of the definitions that have been given of 'linguistics' itself. This shows us our tool of looking at Processes and Participants in a rather different setting and slightly extended to take in some further aspects of sentence structure. What we will do is the following: first, *we will consider the definitions very literally*, looking closely at what the, usually ignored, grammatical forms tell us and, second, we will then interpret the 'hidden meaning' of these apparently quite innocuous and straightforward forms. Looking at the texts very literally is the first step towards focusing on *the texts themselves* rather than on our implicit and apparently automatic understanding of those texts—that is, on what the texts actually are saying rather than what we think they might be saying.

Applying a linguistic tool: sentence structure

Here then are four definitions, the first from a dictionary, the rest from some standard introductions to linguistics (all references in this introduction are given in references sections at the end of each chapter):

- "1. **Linguistics** is the study of the way in which language works."
  (*Collins COBUILD English dictionary*. HarperCOLLINS, 1995)

- "Linguistics can be defined as the scientific inquiry into human language—into its structures and uses and the relationship between them, as well as into the development and acquisition of language." (Finegan, 1989, *Language: its structure and use*. p13)

- "Linguistics is the name given to the discipline which studies human language." (Widdowson, *Linguistics*. 1996:3)

- "Linguistics tries to answer the basic questions 'What is language?' and 'How does language work?'. It probes into various aspects of these problems, such as 'What do all languages have in common?', 'What range of variation is found among languages?', 'How does human language differ from animal communication?', 'How does a child learn to speak?', 'How does one write down and analyse an unwritten language?', 'Why do languages change?', 'To what extent are

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social class differences reflected in language?' and so on."
(Aitchison, 1992, *Teach Yourself Linguistics.* p3/4)

Now, if you were asked what we have just learned, you would probably most naturally give back some of the information that these definitions contain. They have told us something about what linguistics is. But understanding what these text fragments said does not require anything particularly linguistic. Indeed, just as mentioned above, probably the language used in these definitions became transparent to you as they were reading them (unless there was a problem of comprehension). When reading normally the precise linguistic details of the texts being read is not in focus. So let us now go back and approach these text fragments as bits of language to be taken apart linguistically—as 'linguistic data' that are going to be subjected to the tools of linguistic analysis.

As we have heard, the heart of linguistics is being systematic, and listening to what language actually does, rather than what we might think it is doing. Thus, what do the above texts tell us *linguistically* that linguistics is? To begin answering such questions linguistically, we turn to our literal interpretations. Precisely because language operates transparently, it typically deposits us on a chute like a playground slide that quickly leaves us at the bottom without having taken in much of the journey. We need to break into this automatic process to make visible just what language features constructed the particular slide we were placed on. As we will see here, and in more detail in the many examples below, this is often a useful and necessary thing to do because, as readers/writers, we are generally *unaware* of the meanings that have been made for us.

So, returning to the above definitions of linguistics, when we pay close attention to the *language* used in them, rather than letting the language be transparent and 'unproblematic', the definitions tell us, for example, that:

- linguistics is a study
- linguistics is a scientific inquiry
- linguistics is a name
- linguistics is a discipline

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We see this by going to the text fragments and picking out the exact grammatical contexts in which the term 'linguistics' was used.

In this collection, then, linguistics is some kind of 'object'—a study, discipline, inquiry, or a name. These are abstract objects. But we still know that they are objects because, linguistically—and, in particular, grammatically—we can count them ('three studies', 'four disciplines'), we can give them various attributes ('an important study', 'a scientific discipline'), and we can use them in the kinds of sentences shown here: i.e., "linguistics is an X". *Grammatically,* this is no different to other kinds of objects, such as tennis balls, pens, and poems. Thus we also find sentences such as "Everest is a mountain", "Marlowe was  a playwright". Despite any differences that we think might be important, grammatically the texts are grouping these diverse entities together in some sense.

So, if we take the language that is used here literally (and this is part of being systematic in our use of our tools—not changing the tool just because we have a different nail), then in *some* sense (precisely which sense we will return to below) the language used is placing linguistics and other objects together.

We can then recognise that when a writer writes:

linguistics is the study of something

then that writer has *chosen* to use a form of language that is very similar to a statement such as:

a microscope is a tool for examining...

that is, we have defined one object (linguistics, microscope) in terms of some other object or class of objects (a study, a tool). When we look at any particular text, because that text has taken us on its very particular slide and deposited us at the bottom, then it can often seem that there was no other way: while on the slide we do not make many choices. But when we compare the particular path taken by one text to those taken in other texts, we can begin to see that the notion of 'choice' is in fact crucial: texts are constructed in order to create particular views of the world, particular relationships between speakers and hearers, and this is inherent in there particular grammatical choices.

Even in our linguistic definition examples we can see this at work. The definitions in fact give us another view on linguistics, too; for example:

- linguistics tries to answer questions
- linguistics probes into questions

In these sentences linguistics is not just some kind of object being related to others, it is now some kind of 'doer'—both an answerer of, and a prober into, questions. This is then, by the same kind of reasoning as above, to place linguistics *grammatically* in the same kind of category as a human being, or an inquisitive animal; typically, the entities that can probe or answer questions are people or conscious beings of some kind, as in:

> the *critic* tries to answer questions about what makes a work good
> a newspaper *reporter* probes into the details of the crime

Thus the language used in these definitions has described linguistics in two ways: first, as some kind of 'object', second as some kind of 'doer'. The latter suggests an additional meaning being made in the text fragments of 'linguistics is something that asks questions'.

This is what the *form* of the definitions tells us. Being systematic about language structures and their uses means that we do not ignore the fact that language is apparently using the same forms to talk about what must, surely, be very different kinds of things ('linguistics', 'animals', 'mountains'). But if we ignored this, we would be throwing away our telescope before looking through it. Instead, we look through and see what we can see: in the present case, we see that language is doing something similar in rather different situations—it is grouping together dramatically different entities ('linguistics', 'animals', 'mountains') and presenting them to the reader in exactly the same way. This brings us to the central linguistic question—a question especially important given our focus on text interpretation—and that is to ask *why*.

This question is often left unaddressed precisely because language functions so well, because it disappears behinds the scenes and performs its magic without us being aware of it. The literal interpretations can seem so 'natural' that they remain unquestioned, but they should not.

So, we have now applied a very simple linguistic tool—looking at the precise grammatical form of the statements made and saying how these are similar to, or different from, the grammatical forms used in some other contexts: so what? The fact that this took us a page or two to set out is an indication that our tool was not yet very good: it took us a lot of text to get to a very simple

result because we have not yet seen the real tools for doing this particular job—the tools of grammatical analysis. When we have these, the discussion goes much further much quicker, but for now—i.e., until we have introduced the appropriate tools in the more detailed discussions that follow later on in the course—we have to make do. Does the result of this analysis of the uses of 'linguistics' tell us anything?

Note first that we have been forced to the statements above because we are being systematic: we cannot look at a text fragment about linguistics and a text about mountains or screwdrivers and ignore as it suits us the fact that similar or different grammatical forms are being used. If we were not being systematic, this would be an option for us; we could ignore—or, more likely, not even see—that there are some similarities involved. But when we apply our tool, in this case looking very simply at the grammatical forms being used, we do it for *all* of our data. This very literal level of interpretation then turns out to be significant because it is in fact an ***additional* part of the meaning** of the sentences and the texts in which they occur—a level of meaning that we normally just jump over when reading. We think we know what the writers wanted to say, so we do not dwell on the forms used.

But actually it is not true that we 'know' what the writers or speakers meant somehow independently of the form of language used—we are not mind-readers. The form of the language employed additionally *commits* the writer to the statements shown in the literal interpretation—regardless of whether or not the writers or speakers themselves wanted to make those meanings; the writer's intention is here actually more or less irrelevant. When the grammatical forms used are the same, an important part of the meaning is the same too (just which parts we will talk about later when we discuss more about meaning and semantics). This matters because these particular extra meanings, whether chosen consciously or not, also commit the writer to

further particular viewpoints which readers/hearers respond to, often without being aware of it. And these extra meanings build up complex interrelationships within texts; these interrelationships are, in good, natural texts, highly *cohesive*—they build up a text as a coherent single unit—whereas in poorer texts, they may be dissonant and create problems of interpretation and viewpoint. Something which readers/hearers might misinterpret as 'bad style' or 'clumsy phrasing' without being quite sure why.

This becomes even clearer when we contrast texts that take different views; when any individual text is working well, its additional meanings appear 'natural' and 'unproblematic'. Only when we are confronted with contrasting views, each presenting itself as 'unproblematic', are we forced to deal with the fact that maybe those views presented are not quite so 'unproblematic' as thought.

Let's compare then the linguistics definitions above with the following definition:

- "Linguistics constitutes the field of the linguist. He seeks a scientific understanding..." (Robins, 1997, *A short history of linguistics)*

Here is a very different kind of grammatical construction concerning different kinds of objects. In this case, linguistics is being described as: 'the field of the linguist'; and for the first time we have a definition of linguistics in relation to a human being, the 'linguist'—i.e., 'linguistics' is what linguists do. The definition then goes on *not* to describe the

'Style' is functional

abstract object 'linguistics' (e.g., what parts it has, how it relates to other abstract objects, etc.) but to talk about what linguists do, 'he seeks a scientific understanding...'. This is not a random choice, a matter of an individual stylistic selection that this author happens to pick, fortuitously arriving at a different phrasing at this point in his discussion than did the other authors above. It is instead part of the more abstract and overall meaning that Robins' text-as-a-whole is concerned with constructing. We see this clearly in this further extract from Robins' introduction:

"In certain cultures ... curiosity and awareness of one's environment have been able to grow into a science, the systematic study of a given subject or range of phenomena, deliberately fostered and

transmitted from one generation to another... Among the sciences that arise in this fashion, folk linguistics has developed in different parts of the civilised world into linguistic science. The term *science* in the collocation *linguistic science* is used here deliberately, but not restrictively. Science in this context is not to be distinguished from the humanities, and the virtues of exactness and of intellectual self-discipline on the one hand, and of sensitivity and imagination on the other, are all called into operation in any satisfactory study of language." (Robins, 1997, p1/2).

It is precisely Robins' focus here to describe linguistics as something that arose within the history of humans' investigation into their world and environment, both physical and social. In short, the definition of Robins fits into a text that creates meanings that make visible the *human* doer, the scientist, the researcher, the one who asks questions.

This is in stark contrast to the definitions above, which were used in texts that instead make meanings that chose to *hide* that human doer— creating a world of abstract investigation and objectivity without human intervention. Robins' definition makes immediate contact with individuals who define and create the activity, the former definitions establish a distance, a boundary between 'linguistic science and how it is' and those who carry out the science.

The first set of definitions can therefore be shown, linguistically, to be part of an overall discourse, or story, or 'narrative', which constructs linguistics as something similar to other sciences, particularly, the natural sciences—which, not incidentally, has been a reoccurring aim of some linguists for well over a century! Swapping the forms of the definitions used between Robins' introduction and the others would weaken both: Robins orientation towards linguistics as a human endeavour would be watered down, just as the other definitions' attempts to define an autonomous branch of science would. The linguistic forms selected, and the very literal meanings made with them, are therefore shown to be significant and important for how the respective writers were constructing their respective texts, and through those texts, their respective 'worlds'.

This is more than a matter of individual or stylistic interpretation: the linguistic forms used are readily recognisable—any analyst could repeat the same 'experiment'. It is therefore a linguistic fact that the

writers are constructing their texts in this way *regardless* of whether they themselves were aware of it, or intended this effect. In short, and as we shall see in more detail later on, particular choices of grammatical forms are here placing some meanings out in the open, in the foreground, making them visible, while others are placed well in the background. The grammatical forms selected commit the writer to these perspectives: just what the perspectives are, however, can only be revealed by further systematic study, employing these and many more tools of linguistics.

In short, this close correlation between very local and small-scale decisions of 'wording' and 'grammatical phrasing' and the larger-scale perspectives and implications of language use and entire texts is a pervasive property of language in action. And it is an aspect of language use that it is difficult to address without linguistics and its systematicity. This is, in fact, one of the main reasons why we need to employ linguistic methods—to make clear these correlations and to follow meanings wherever they are being made.

This demonstrates that the additional meanings that come from the close literal interpretation of the linguistic forms adopted in a text contribute significantly to how a text is constructed and interpreted. The additional meanings add in a further layer of complexity on top of our superficial reading of a text. These meanings bring out particular similarities and connections—for example, linguistics being an autonomous object—while at the same time placing other potential connections in the background—for example, linguistics  being a human activity. Language therefore, whenever it is used, *both hides things and makes things visible*. And so, since, in a very important sense, language in use *makes* the meanings that are expressed, and furthermore, since it is people (generally) who use language, it is they who ultimately have responsibility for the meanings that their language makes. This is true regardless of whether the speaker/writer also had these meanings in mind or not.

All texts make these kinds of commitments: the closer these commitments are to the 'world-view' or ideology of the community of speakers and hearers, the more transparent (i.e., invisible) they are: but they are there nonetheless. Consider Robin's text again. At the time when it was first was written (the first edition of the book appeared in

1967), for example, the use of the general pronoun 'he' for the generic 'linguist' was still considered by many in more 'serious' writing to be unproblematic: now, of course, many more people read this kind of language use as an implicit commitment to the assumption that, generally speaking, the linguists in the scientific community doing scientific work are male and so would consider other choices if they wanted to show themselves as not sharing that commitment. This is an important indication that systems of interpretation change over time—they are not fixed or given, but instead or as much a part of the changing linguistic system as any other; we shall see considerably more of this aspect of language below.

There is then a very strong relationship between the context of use of a text and the linguistic details, the particular bits of language, that are selected in that text. In this case, the 'bit of language' that carries this latter additional meaning—the pronoun choice 'he'—is a relatively simple bit to observe; the slightly more abstract grammatical patterns we picked out above are less easy to come across without some reason for picking them out, which is why we will discuss some of the tools for recognising them in much more detail below. But some of the most interesting meanings of texts come from rather more complex patterns, and it is here that linguistics comes in with greater force. Linguistics, in its systematicity, provides a toolkit for following these meanings and making them visible, uncovering them, *wherever and whenever* they are being hidden. It is not only in grammatical patterns that such meanings are being made: choices of pronunciation, sounds, patterns of meaning, ways of constructing texts, and many more all contribute. And they can do this in all kinds of texts: ranging from works of literature to bus tickets.

## 2.4.3 Putting information in

Just as selection of Participants can leave certain information out, selection can also add information in, and that information may not be the information that the text at first glance might be thought to be considering. An example of this is the news article below. This is, at first glance—i.e., at the headline ("The Para's new leader: He'll do his job well says major's wife") and the caption for the large picture ("Major Keeble ... will lead the Para's into battle")—might justifiably be thought to be about Major Keeble.

**The Paras' new leader**

**He'll do his job well says major's wife**

THE wife of the new CO of the 2nd Parachute Battalion spoke last night of her fears for her husband's safety.

As she played in the sunshine with her four children, Jenny Keeble said she hoped her husband would not have to go into battle again.

She said: "I pray he and his men have done enough. But if they do go on I know that he is a man who will do his job to the best of his ability and I am certain he and the 2nd Parachute Battalion will succeed.

Major Christopher Keeble, a 40-year-old devout Roman Catholic, is to succeed Colonel Herbert Jones who died leading his men against an Argentine machine-gun post in the battle for Goose Green.

Yesterday Jenny Keeble's family and friends gathered around in the garden of her old vicarage home—a rambling Tudor building at Maddington on Salisbury Plain—for a picnic afternoon as she tried to maintain an air of normility for the children's sake.

*Major Keeble ... will lead the paras into battle*

Below is a summary of the transitivity analysis: the Processes, Participants and Circumstances for each of the events/states in the text that is presented linguistically as such—i.e., by a clause.

| PARTICIPANT | PROCESS | PARTICIPANT | CIRCUMSTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| The wife of the new CO of the 2nd. Parachute Battalion | spoke | | last night / of her fears for her husband's safety |
| Jenny Keeble | said | | as she played in the sunshine with her 4 children |
| she | hoped | her husband would not have to go into battle again | |
| She | said | | |
| I | pray | | |
| he and his men | have done | enough | |
| they | do go on | | |
| I | know | | |
| he | is | a man who will do his job to the best of his ability | |
| I | am | certain | |
| he and the 2nd Parachute Battalion | will succeed | | |
| Major Christopher Keeble, a 40 year-old devout Roman Catholic, | is to succeed | Colonel Herbert Jones who died leading his men ... | |
| Jenny Keeble's family and friends | gathered around | | in the garden of her old vicarage home... / for a picnic afternoon |
| she | tried to maintain | an air of normality | for the children's sake |

This transitivity analysis makes it very clear that actually the text is hardly about Major Keeble at all. We should probably have got this impression from reading the text through, and if we did, then the linguistic analysis makes it very clear why. The table divides the Participants up into two columns—the leftmost Participant is the main 'Doer' or 'Be-er' in the clause, which in this text is also generally the grammatical Subject; the rightmost Participant is the one or thing who is 'done to'. The former participant is generally called more technically, the **Actor**, when we are dealing with an action clause, or the **Sayer** or **Senser**, when we are dealing with clauses of communication or mental processes. All can be also be described as **Agents**. The precise terminology is given in more detailed introductions to transitivity analysis (e.g., Butt *et al.,* 2001). Although transitivity analysis makes it possible for the text interpreter to make much finer discriminations, we cannot focus on this in this course and

so for the time being we stay with the rather 'pre-theoretical' labels, relying on our 'everyday' understanding of what they might mean.

Nevertheless, even this level of detail allows us to go beyond a superficial reading of the text. Just counting in the columns we find, for example, that Jenny Keeble is employed 9 times and Christopher Keeble only 5 times: so it would be difficult to read the text as being simply 'about' the major. But the analysis goes further: if we look at *where* the references to the major and the wife occur, then we see that there are bigger differences. All but one of the references to the major are embedded within statements, knowledge, claims or prayers of Jenny Keeble: they do not occur as independent statements. Thus the text only gives us access to information about Christopher Keeble through the wife.

This should then raise the question as to why it appeared as a front page story at all: a wife's view of her husband, her knowledge and prayers, do not often make it on to the front page of a national newspaper (which is itself not a coincidence of course!). When we place the article in the context of the conflict between Argentina and Britain, and the increase in voices on the British side against the conflict and criticisms of the sense in sending British soldiers (portrayed again overwhelmingly as male), then the article becomes more of a presentation of a role model: look, this wife is doing what she should, standing by her husband and supporting the job that he has to do "while maintaining an air of normality for the children's sake".

With this function, the structure of the text as creating a world where soldiers go off to battle and the wives stay with the children and pray is readily seen to fit in to the discourses occurring at that time. The information in the text could have been structured in endless other ways—but it was not; and these systematic choices make meanings over and above what may appear to be the meaning on the surface.

> "Language helps enact and transmit every type of inequality, including that between the sexes; it is part of the 'micropolitical structure' that helps maintain the larger political-economic structure." (Thorne & Henley, 1975:15)

Taking this analysis further can lead in to very interesting areas: work here includes detailed criticisms of various ideological stances taken up in language, such as the role of language in maintaining racism (van Dijk, 1991), sexism (cf. Cameron, 1998; Lakoff, 1975) and other social injustices, as well as

simply making clear that there are different positions being adopted—
we will see later on one such example concerning contrasting political
positions as presented in newspapers.

## 2.5   A summary of the different kinds of meanings made in texts

We have started with a sketch of some of the places where meanings
are systematically made in texts: this is systematic in that it is part of
how the language system works. It is not that speakers/writers may
sometimes choose to place some meaning somewhere, the structure of
the language system of English (any most, if not all, other languages)
itself requires that particular kinds of meaning appear in particular
places: part of the task of linguistics is to uncover just what those
places are and to describe what kinds of meanings occur there. The
distinct kinds of meanings seen here are themselves systematically
organised and so it is worthwhile getting clearer about their distinct
contributions to the meanings of texts as a whole. The *kinds* of
meanings found in texts and expressed through sentences are thus
themselves describable. Here we name them and make them explicit
so we can talk about them later, as well as follow in more detail how
they are expressed in texts.

In our biography examples above we looked at the role played by the
'first' element in sentences. This was found to be systematic and was
different between English and German. But the meaning of the
Textual meaning   selection for first position is similar in both languages: this
selection serves to *organise the text*: it provides a framework for
the reader/hearer to interpret how the writer/speaker is choosing to
select their information. In the English biographies this framework
was generally provided by the author and the author's works, whereas
in German the biographies were also being structured by referring to
the time of occurrence of particular events in the author's life. This
kind of meaning—i.e., meaning particularly concerned with how a
text is being organised—is called **textual meaning**. It is a kind of
meaning that is essential for texts to be perceived as well organised
and coherent. We cannot avoid making textual meanings, the only
question is how well we select them for our purposes when creating
text. Quite literally, if we get our textual choices wrong, then we will
have given false signposts to our readers and hearers; and that can
only make our intended meaning more difficult to follow. Different

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kinds of text types, or genres, employ different kinds of signposting and, again, it is the job of (those who do) linguistics to investigate these differences and to describe them.

In our radio interview examples we were concerned with a rather different kind of meaning: the meaning of expressing certainty or not, of enacting social roles, of showing how strongly we are making statements in a dialogue, etc. Because this kind of meaning is concerned with interpersonal social relationships, it is called **interpersonal meaning.** As we saw, the place that is typically of most importance for expression interpersonal meaning is the Mood element of sentences: this is the 'interpersonal' centre, the place where the interpersonal action happens. Thus selections in and around the Mood element are a direct embodiment and enactment of particular social relations as mediated via language.

Both of these kinds of meaning are rather different to what is often thought of as 'the' meaning of a statement or text: the basic 'who did what to whom when why and how' kind of meaning that we saw in the final two newspaper text analyses. This latter kind of meaning, because it is concerned with how our ideas about the world are structured and organised, is called **ideational meaning.** The particular subtype of this kind of meaning, that to do with organising our experiences of the world in terms of events and doers and states and objects and qualities that we saw in the transitivity analyses, is then called **experiential meaning**—precisely because it is how the language and our selections within the language represents for ourselves and our hearers/readers aspects of our experience. This was also largely the kind of meaning that was being manipulated in the examples of different definitions of linguistics with which we begun: while the grammar of some of the definitions was setting up an experience of linguistics as a kind of object or as an autonomous actor in its own right, the grammar of the definitions established linguistics as something done by people.

These different kinds of meanings are summarised in the diagram below. We will see later that there is a further subtype of ideational meaning. We will also see that each of these kinds of meaning surfaces in characteristic places and in characteristic kinds of linguistic constructions. They are, therefore, an important part of

understanding how languages are structured and how languages are capable of meeting such diverse purposes and requirements and offer a useful classification, or map, of the territory to be covered in any analysis of texts.
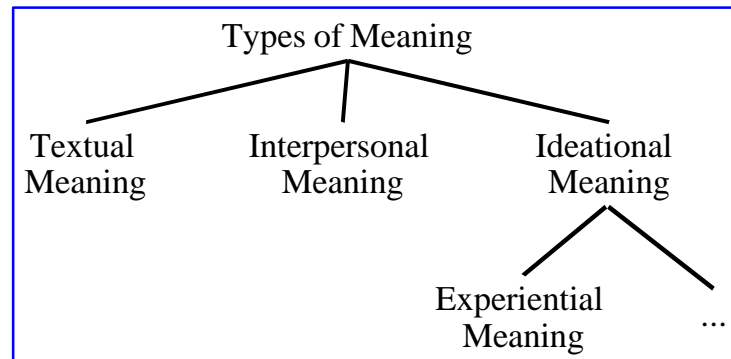


Each of these kinds of meanings relates to particular aspects of the situation in which language is used, or in which the language is intended to be received. In particular, we can now state the following strong tendency:

- ideational meaning tends to relate, to express, to indicate the field of the situation

- interpersonal meaning tends to relate, to enact, to indicate the tenor of the situation

- textual meaning tends to create, to enable, to indicate the mode of the situation.

And one of the amazing things about language—and about sentences and clauses in particular—is that each such sentence or clause makes all of these kinds of distinct meanings at the same time, and yet we can recover that meaning usually without too much difficulty. We might not be aware that we have recovered the interpersonal and textual meanings, but we have. It has taken linguistics (and linguists) a long time to realise that these kinds of meanings are all present—in fact, the first compelling statement of their existence and consequences for describing language is generally attributed to Bühler's (1934) *Sprachtheorie* and his **organon** model. Primarily because of his psychological background, Bühler saw language expressions as essentially mediating between 'sender' and 'receiver' concerning objects and situations. This should clearly suggest just

Fig. 3.
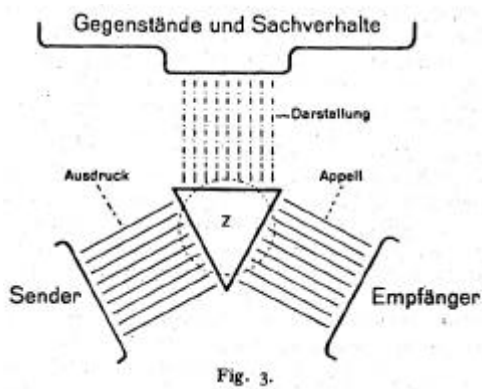
how much of linguistics has happened very recently in terms of the age of the discipline as a whole.

The three kinds of meanings described here—collectively termed **metafunctions**—differ somewhat from those outlined by Bühler, who, again because of his direct connection with psychology, placed considerably less emphasis on the grammatical patterns that carry the differing kinds of meanings that we have now seen—but the direct line of descent is nevertheless clear. That is one of the essential developments in linguistics that we want to bring out here—we are looking at ways of uncovering the meanings made in texts, but if this is to be done *linguistically*, then we need to find concrete, identifiable linguistic evidence. That evidence can be very subtle. As we go more into the field, we will see that the evidence consists of regular patterns of considerable complexity and which are not immediately obviously simply from a superficial reading of the linguistic 'data'. And it is to make these patterns visible at all that we require the more complex linguistic tools of linguistic analysis.

And so, although it has long been known that uses of language cover a variety of communicative functions, what we are beginning to see here is the beginnings of a much tighter linkage between what we can see in language—the concrete linguistic forms and patterns—and the functions that we can presume that language is carrying out. This relates directly to how we begun this chapter: not only do we see a broad correspondence between the kinds of situations that language occur in and the grammatical forms and meanings that occur in the language, in fact we have a more structured systematic relationship.

Thus, to repeat: the ideational meanings that we find in texts correspond quite reliably to the *field* of the register of the text, the interpersonal meanings correspond well to the *tenor* of the text, and the textual meanings correspond with the *mode* of the text. This is one of the reasons why, given a text, we can say a lot about the kind of situations that that text can appropriately occur and, conversely, given a situation, we can already say quite a lot about the kinds of language that occur there.

The ability to read meaning into linguistic patterns reliably and across all instances of language use is of paramount importance in taking linguistic interpretation beyond what can be achieved by non-linguistic interpretation. Some consequences of this are drawn in the following somewhat provocative statement by one of the main figures in the development of **functional** linguistics, Michael Halliday:

> "A discourse analysis that is not based on grammar is not an analysis at all, but simply a running commentary on a text: either an appeal has to be made to some set of non-linguistic conventions, or to some linguistic features that are trivial enough to be accessible without a grammar...; or else the exercise remains a private one in which one explanation is as good or as bad as another." (Halliday, 1994:xvi-xvii)

That language manages to express so many distinct kinds of meaning simultaneously is itself worth considering more closely. It is not straightforward to collect separate meanings together in a single sound sequence in a way that a hearer or reader can reliably recover them. An analogy might be the following. Consider trying to inform a correspondent which three colours you had selected (for some obscure reason such as these were the three colours that you had decided to paint the kitchen). Take the three colours, mix them together, paint the result on a piece of paper and send this to the poor correspondent. Can the receiver of the letter now unambiguously recover the three colours the kitchen is to be painted? Probably not. The information of the individuality of the three colours has been lost; mixing them together in this way is not an effective way of functionally transmitting the information. So language clearly does not in general mix meanings in this way. Something else must be going on.

The ability of language to mix meanings in a way that leaves them recoverable for the hearer or reader is in large part due to another vital property of language: the fact that language employs a range of different kinds of *structures*. These linguistic structures carry the weight of combining diverse meanings in such a way that a reader/hearer can re-extract them. Without structure, adding diverse meanings would be just like mixing together our different colour paints until we are left with a muddy brown; with structure, we have a

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richly organised piece of linguistic information which carries its messages with great robustness and reliability. The distinct colours are combined, but in a way that maintained their separate contributions. This is one of the reasons why structure is so important to an understanding of how language works—and so we will return to structure in much more detail later in the course. However, the trick, always, is not to sever the very necessary link between these complex structures and the kinds of meanings that we see in the metafunctions. Structure (i.e., form) is there both so that the meanings (i.e., function) remain recoverable and so that those meanings can themselves become as complex as human cultures require. Without structure, complex meanings are not possible and below we will see why.

Opening up the territory

Finally, before we think that we have mapped out all the possibilities, that we 'only' need a detailed grammatical analysis in our toolkit and that will get the job done, let us glance at one final text and raise some questions concerning it: particularly questions about where its significant meanings are 'hiding'. This text belongs to a completely different genre to those we have seen so far in this chapter: it is a poem by the Scottish poet Tom Leonard, and it concerns the role and function of language.

> ah knew a linguist wance
> wance ah knew a linguist
>
> shi used tay git oanty mi
> ah wish I could talk like you
> ahv lost my accent
>
> thi crux iz says ah
> shiftin ma register
> tay speak tay a linguist
>
> would you swear tay swerr
> and no abjure
> the extra-semantic kinetics
> uv thi fuckin poor
>
> ach
> mobile society
> mobile ma arse

(Tom Leonard, from "Ghostie Men" in *Intimate Voices*, 1984)

Here we have significant choices—and this entails meaningful choices—being made of very different kinds. The poem has to be read with a particular systematic set of sound choices—the phonetic and phonological system of English as spoken in Glasgow, this is communicated additionally through the deliberate choice of a 'non-standard' (exactly what this might mean we return to later) way of spelling, or **orthography**, the grammatical patterns and the lexical selections—the words—are also carrying a range of meanings at differing levels as always. We have aspects of reported dialogue, we have repetition creating addition layers of patterns.

All of these meaning communicating choices need to be identified and related in order to understand how the language manages to support the effects and interpretations that it does. Our linguistic toolkit thus needs to be particularly flexible and offer a wide range of instruments. We also need to have a good grasp of the different kinds of phenomena that we are going to apply those tools to. To shift metaphors slightly, we need a far more precise 'map' of the linguistic territory.

## 2.6 Linguistics tools
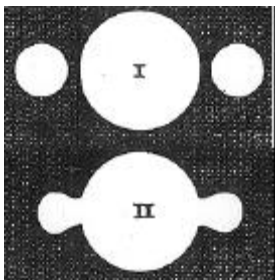


We will take the kinds of linguistic tools that we have seen in this chapter as well as several others further in various directions. The particular 'linguistic' tools we have used in this chapter were still very blunt: they could not tell us very much about the different grammatical forms used, and so we cannot expect more precise answers. Our results resemble the vague blobs seen by Galileo and his contemporaries when looking at Saturn and its rings through the first telescopes: this was more than could be seen before, and certainly raised many questions crucial to subsequent development, but the observations themselves were quite limited until the tools had been improved. In subsequent parts of the course, as we introduce more material, we will see more of the current set of tools that linguistics provides for more detailed questions. This would be looking in more 'depth'. We can also look more 'broadly': that is, we can explore other texts, related or not, to see how the kinds of extra meanings that we have now seen are serving to create texts.

But even our blunt tools tell us more than none. For example, several, more recent introductions to linguistics take the step of barely defining linguistics at all before starting on their introduction. They either take it for granted—as something like the science of language—or let it slip by quickly, as in the following introductory paragraph:

- "Language is many things—a system of communication, a medium for thought, a vehicle for literary expression, a social institution, a matter for political controversy, a catalyst for nation building. All human beings normally speak at least one language and it is hard to imagine much significant social, intellectual, or artistic creativity taking place in its absence. Each of us, then, has a stake in understanding something about the nature and use of language. This book provides a basic introduction to linguistics, the discipline that studies these matters." (O'Grady, Dobrovolsky and Katamba, 1996 [3rd. edition], *Contemporary Linguistics: An introduction,* p1)

Here we combine some of the aspects of the paragraphs we saw above. Linguistics remains a 'discipline', but we have more of a sense of motivation for the reader/student—language is something that everyone "has a stake in". The main thrust of the introduction is moved away from linguistics and towards the presumed subject matter of linguistics, i.e., 'language'. This allows a swift rhetorical shift to dealing with those properties and structures of language, and how they are to be studied—the presumed content of linguistics.

While, on the one hand, this prepares the ground for talking about and doing linguistics, it also, on the other hand, hides some of the choices that are involved in choosing a particular view of language—any view of language taken is already committing itself in terms of a linguistic theory: and if that is not explicit, then it remains hidden; theoretical choice is thus presented as natural truth. A situation where we must always be on our guard. The reader can thus be led in various directions: by concentrating on certain of the 'design features' of communication systems, human language can be made to look more or less like animal communication in general (e.g., like bee dances, or chimpanzee communication, but more so); similarly, by focusing on certain very abstract properties of the 'sign' defined in the field of *semiotics*, human language can be considered as just another sign system (e.g., like traffic lights, but more so); and so on. Particular

theoretical orientations can lead in directions without any indication that a choice of direction has been made. And asking particular questions rather than others, already prefigures certain answers being obtained rather than others. This is another line that will be taken in this introduction: toolkits should not be used blindly; particular tools may be more or less appropriate for different tasks and we need to be sensitised to the choices available and the consequences of those choices for the results we can obtain.

In order to make this clear, we will now adopt a rather different initial definition of linguistics to those offered above, one that goes back to our earlier discussion. We will define linguistics not as a *noun*, but more as a particular kind of *clause* (which we will introduce and define below); i.e., not as an 'abstract object' but as something happening. 'Linguistics' as a label for a discipline is not so important as 'doing things linguistically'. And doing things linguistically means, as suggested above:

**being purposefully systematic in your dealings with language.**

This can be filled out in all sorts of ways, with all sorts of theories—there have been and continue to be very many diverse linguistic theories, several of which we shall see below; but the first crucial step is thinking about language systematically for the purposes of revealing more about language and language use. Approaching language in this way *is* doing linguistics: the rest can follow in due time.

This approach itself leaves several open questions of course, which we will take up in more detail. In particular,

- How can you be 'systematic' in dealing with language?

- How systematic is it possible to be?

- How systematic do you need to be?

Answering these questions, as we shall see, already provides much of the subject matter of linguistics.

## Reading and references

The framework used for thinking about the *situations of use* of texts was set out in an early form in:

Halliday, M.A.K., McIntosh, A. and Strevens, P. (1964) *The linguistic sciences and language teaching,* London : Longman.

Halliday, M.A.K. and Hasan, R. (1989) *Language, Context and Text: a social semiotic perspective,* London : Oxford University Press.

A good introduction, with particular ideas concerning the relevance of the approach for teaching, can be found in:

Butt, D., Fahey, R.,  Spinks, S. & Yallop, C. (1995). *Using Functional* Grammar*: an* Explorer's *Guide.* Australia: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University. Chapter 1.

The translations of biographies and their comparisons were taken from:

Purser, E. & Paul, L. (1999). *Translation: Übersetzung.* Berlin : Cornelsen.

where these issues are discussed in more detail.

The radio interview discussion is drawn mostly from:

Hodge, R. & Kress, G. (1988) *Social Semiotics.* Cambridge, England: Polity Press. (Chapter 5: 'Social definitions of the real')

which provides an introduction to many aspects of the social interpretation of language.

The introduction to news reports, events, and packaging events in clauses is taken from:

Delin, Judy (2000) *Language and Everyday Life.* Sage Publishers.

The Quarry Load-Shedding and Major Keeble newspaper article discussions are drawn from:

Fairclough, Norman (1989). *Language and power.* London : Longman.

The introduction to dialogue and Mood is taken from:

Butt, D., Fahey, R.,  Spinks, S. & Yallop, C. (1995). *Using Functional* Grammar*: an Explorer's Guide.* Australia: National

Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University. Chapters 4 and 5.

The introductions to linguistics referred to in this chapter were:

Aitchison, J. (1992). *Teach yourself Linguistics.* London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Finegan, E. (1989). *Language: its structure and use.* Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace and Company.

Robins, R. H. (1997). *A short history of linguistics.* London: Longman A ASL 027 f/26(4)

Widdowson, H. G. (1996). Linguistics. Oxford : Oxford University Press. A ASL 025 f/381

And some thought-provoking and entertaining examples of the use and abuse of language are given in:

Bolinger, D. (1980) *Language: the loaded weapon; the use and abuse of language today.* London: Longman. A ANG 102.5/904

More on politeness can be found in:

Yule, George (1996) *Pragmatics.* Oxford University Press. ASL 092 F 382

Other references:

Bühler, K. (1934) *Sprachtheorie*, Dordrecht: Gustav Fischer.

Cameron, D. (ed.)(1998) *The feminist critique of language: a reader.* London: Routledge.

Lakoff, R. (1975) *Language and woman's place.*

Hoey, M. (2001) *Textual interaction: an introduction to written discourse analysis*. Routledge.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1994) *Introduction to Functional Grammar.* London: Edward Arnold. 2nd. edition. or Halliday, M.A.K. and Matthiessen, C.M.I.M. (2003) *Introduction to Functional Grammar.* London: Edward Arnold. 3rd. edition

Thorne, B. and Henley, N. (1975) *Language and sex: difference and dominance.*

van Dijk, T. A. (1991)(ed.) *Racism and the Press: critical studies in racism and migration,* London: Routledge.

**More difficult:**

A detailed example of applying linguistic analysis methods to the definition of linguistics is given in:

Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress (1993) Language as Ideology. 2nd. Edition. Routledge. Chapter 2: "Transformations and Truth", pp15—37.

This is carried out with particular reference to the definitions employed by Noam Chomsky in his view of transformational grammar, which we will hear more of later in the course.

A further linguistic analysis of the rhetoric of Chomsky is given by:

Hoey, M. (2000) Persuasive rhetoric in linguistics: a stylistic study of some features of the language of Noam Chomsky. In: Hunston, S. and Thompson, G., (eds.) *Evaluation in Text: authorial stance and the construction of discourse.* Oxford, England: