

Analysing Text: Meaning in Context

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The aim of this course is to enable you to analyse texts with understanding. In real life we encounter texts either as a flow of sound (with or without gestures) or as a series of marks on the paper (with or without images). But the understanding of the text depends on understanding the relationship between context of situation, meaning (semantics), and wording (lexicogrammar). The discussion will begin with an exploration of this relationship. Using the systemic functional modelling of language as the theoretical base, we treat meaning as an interface which links context to lexicogrammar, and we think of lexicogrammar as an interface which links the highly abstract level of meaning to speech or writing. The generic structure potential of the text is activated by the context of situation; its recognition depends on the semantic selections; these semantic selections activate lexicogrammatical selections which are ultimately expressed either phonologically as a stream of sound that can be heard or graphologically as written symbols that can be seen. Naturally occurring texts will be used as examples in the discussion, and students will be encouraged to participate in some actual analyses.

Recommended Readings:

David Butt and Rebekah Wegener. 2007. 'The work of concepts: context and metafunction in the systemic functional model', In *Continuing Discourse on Language, Volume 2*, edited by Ruqaiya Hasan, Christian Matthiessen and Jonathan J Webster. London & Oakville: Equinox.

Carmel Cloran, Virginia Stuart-Smith and Lynne Young. 2007. 'Modes of discourse', In *Continuing Discourse on Language, Volume 2*, edited by Ruqaiya Hasan, Christian Matthiessen and Jonathan J Webster. London & Oakville: Equinox.

M. A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan. 1985. *Language, Context and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-semiotic Perspective*. Geelong, Victoria: Deakin University Press (reprinted: Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1989).

M. A. K. Halliday. 1994. 'So you say "pass"... thank you three muchly', In *What's Going on Here? Complementary Studies of Professional Talk*, edited by Allen D. Grimshaw. Norwood, N J: Ablex.

Ruqaiya Hasan. 1979. 'On the notion of text', In *Text vs Sentence: Basic Questions of Text Linguistics, Volume 2*, edited by Janos. S. Petofi. Amsterdam: Helmut Buske.

Ruqaiya Hasan. 1994. 'Situation and the definition of genre', In *What's Going on Here: Complementary Studies of Professional Talk*, edited by Allen D. Grimshaw. Norwood, N J: Ablex.

Ruqaiya Hasan. 1995. 'The conception of context in text,' In *Discourse in Society: Systemic Functional Perspectives*, edited by Peter H. Fries and Michael Gregory. Norwood, N J: Ablex.

J. R. Martin. 1999. 'Modeling context: a crooked path of progress in contextual linguistics', In *Text and Context in Functional Linguistics*, edited by Mohsen Ghadessy. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins.