Today we are going to study a journal article as our source of learning. I will show you the article in chunks so that we can explore it together.

There will be some questions in each slide, and I will shout out some names to answer the question. So please pay attention.

For full version of the article, you can download it in my website.

At the end of the lesson you are expected to be able to:

1. describe the history of SFL,
2. compare SFL with other linguistic theories, and
3. explain the key elements of SFL.

READY

# An Introduction to Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics

Wael Abdulrahman Almurashi

A Lecture Assistant

Department of Languages and Translations

Faculty of Science and Arts

Taibah University

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

1. What is the title of the article?
2. Who is the author?
3. What is the name of the journal?
4. Can you mention other detail of the article?

**Abstract**

Numerous theories have been successful in accounting for aspects of language. One of the most substantial theories is Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (often SFL), which has been employed in the literature on linguistics and applied linguistics. This paper aims to introduce Halliday's SFL with a focus on an overview of SFL as a linguistic tradition largely developed by Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday (often M.A.K. Halliday). Furthermore, this introduction compares SFL to other linguistic traditions, such as the transformational generative linguistics represented by Noam Chomsky and Bloomfield's structural tradition. This research also explains the key elements of SFL, SFL as an applicable tradition, examples of the value of applying SFL in detail, and finally, presents the benefits associated with working with SFL as a communicative motivation in learning a language.

**Keywords:** Linguistic tradition, Field, Tenor, Mode, Transitivity, Theme, Rheme, Transitivity

5. What is the aim of the paper?
6. To what does the author compare SFL?
7. What else will be explained in the paper?

## 1. Introduction

In the early 20th century, linguistics has witnessed a considerable number of theories and each one has its distinct orientations, trends, and subjects of study. However, most of these theories, such as Halliday and Chomsky's traditions, have been initiated by a number of followers or independently. In addition, each theory has been successful in accounting for aspects of language from a certain perspective. One of the most substantial theories is Halliday's SFL that has attracted the most attention and has been frequently employed in the literature on linguistics and applied linguistics. This paper aims to introduce Halliday's SFL. It will discuss a number of aspects about it, namely, the background of the SFL as a linguistic tradition, SFL compared to other linguistic traditions, the key elements of the SFL, SFL as an applicable tradition, examples of the value of applying SFL, and finally, the benefits associated with working with SFL.

8. What will the paper discuss?

9. Why?

## 2. The Background to SFL as a Linguistic Tradition

SFL is an approach to language developed largely by M.A.K. Halliday and his followers during the 1960s in the United Kingdom, and later in Australia (O'Donnell 2012, p. 1). SFL is built on previous works of some influential linguists such as Bronislaw Malinowski and J.R. Firth. Bronislaw Malinowski was a polish anthropologist who did most of his works based in England (O'Donnell 2012, p. 5). The second linguist is J.R. Firth who established linguistics as a discipline in Britain. He developed Malinowski's theory about the centrality of the context of situation and applied it through his linguistic model. In addition, he developed an approach to phonology called 'prosodic phonology', which enables phonological features to be shared over successive phonemes rather than each phoneme having its own unique features (O'Donnell 2012, p. 6).

10. Who is the noted author of SFL?

11. Who influence his work?

Nowadays, the SFL approach is used world-wide, especially in language education, and for a number of purposes like discourse analysis. It has continued to be closely associated with sociology even when a good number of linguistic theories deal with language in the form of mental practice. The Halliday's tradition, as an illustration, is more interested in the manner by which language is utilised in social settings so as to attain a specific target (O'Donnell, 2012, p. 2). SFL, with regards to data, does not tackle the manner of language representation or process in the human brain, but would rather try to see discourses produced in the form of written or oral language and what is contained in the tests that are produced. Because of the concern of SFL with the use of language, great importance is placed on the function of language, such as what language is used for, rather than what language structure is all about and the manner by which it is composed (Matthiessen & Halliday, 1997).

12. What is the main concern of SFL?

13. Why is SFL used world-wide?

## 3. SFL Compared to other Linguistic Traditions

SFL has its distinctive respects in comparison with the other linguistic systems. For example, the systemic functional linguistics featured by Michael Halliday and the transformational generative linguistics represented by Noam Chomsky have been deemed as two of the most influential and pivotal traditions in the linguistic academic fields. However, both systems are distinct in many respects, but virtually make the same impacts. Yet there are a number of differences between these two linguistics systems. For instance, the systemic functional grammar (often SFG) studies the language through meaning (i.e. its function), while transformational generative grammar (often TGG) is a fully influential and developed version of linguistics through form. As an illustration, Halliday believed that linguistics should describe actual sentences with many functions and without a deep structure. In addition, he was concerned with the function of the sentence, or in other words, the writer's purpose in writing the sentence (Matthiessen & Halliday 1997). Conversely, Chomsky maintained that linguistics should go beyond merely describing syntactic structures, and its purpose is to elucidate why language is structured in the way that it is. To summarize, Chomsky characterized form independently of function and meaning, while Halliday had good reasons to believe that function and meaning can help shape form (Bavali & Sadighi 2008).

14. How many linguistic systems mentioned in the passage?
15. What are they?
16. What makes them different?

17. How do Halliday's and Bloomfield's perspectives differ?

18. How do Bloomfield's and Chomsky's perspectives differ?

The second comparison is between Halliday's functional tradition and Bloomfield's structural tradition. The structural theory was featured by Leonard Bloomfield, who developed the structural linguistics in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s. However, Halliday insisted that the central concern of linguistics should be the study of the language through meaning, which was different from the dominant Bloomfield approach in American linguistics (Matthiessen & Halliday 1997). Bloomfield rejected the possibility that linguistics analyzes meaning. He was fully convinced of the need for linguists to study oral language in lieu of studying written documents. The documents, for example, do not fully represent a spoken language due to the fact that language undergoes changes over time and what something means today might have meant a different thing altogether in the past (Hall & Koerner, 1987).

## 4. The Key Elements of SFL

In SFL, a text is analyzed in four ways. They are as follows: Context, Semantics, Lexico-grammar, and Phonology (see figure 1). To begin with the context, context is classified as one of the central concerns, because it is integral to the overall process of making meaning. In fact, when language occurs in a context, it will relate to or is linked to a number of contexts (see figure 2) (Matthiessen & Halliday 1997). They are:
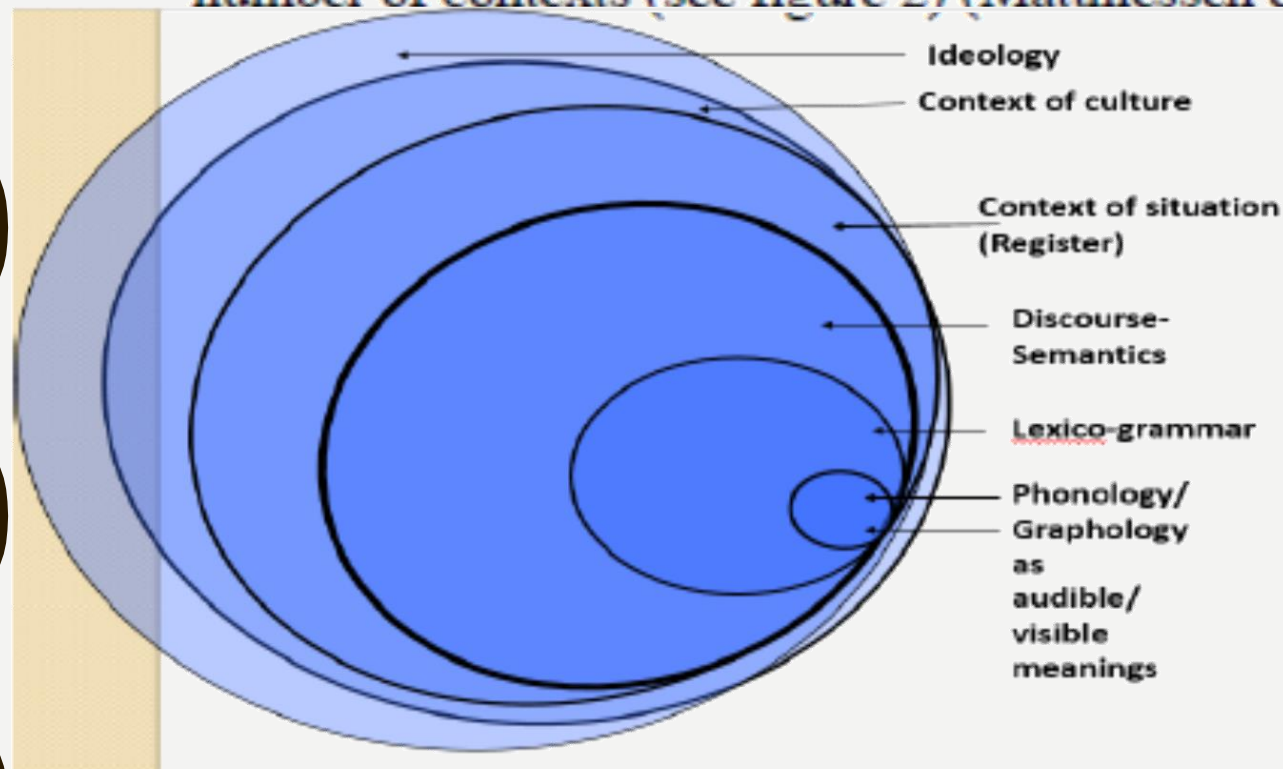


Figure 1. The Different Levels of the SFL

19. Please describe the figure.

1- *The Context of Culture* [genres].

2- *The Context of Situation* [the technical term for this is Register].
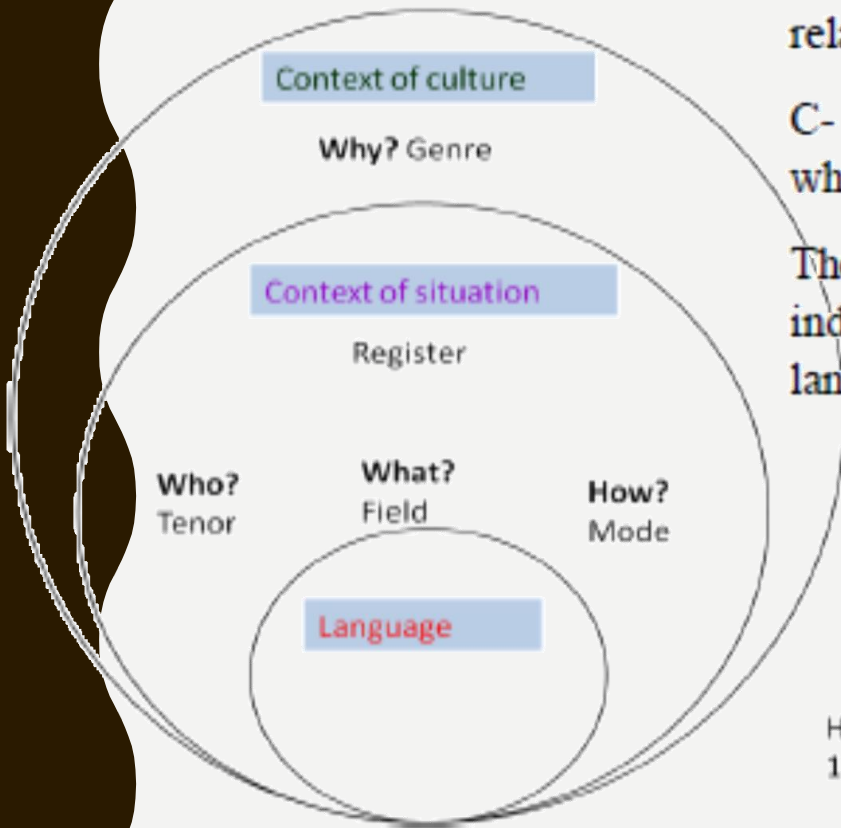
Halliday models the context of situation, where the aspects of the context relate intimately to the language used to create text, in terms of three important strands (Matthiessen & Halliday, 1997) (see figure 3): They are:

A- *Field*: gives us an indication of the topic or what is being talked about.

B- *Tenor*: gives us an indication of who is/are involved in the communication and the relationships between them.

C- *Mode*: gives us an indication of what part the language is playing in the interaction and what form it takes (written or spoken).

These three Register variables are used to explain people's intuitive understanding that individuals use different resources, different kinds and different parts from the system of language (Matthiessen & Halliday 1997).

Context of culture

Why? Genre

Context of situation

Register

Who?    What?    How?
Tenor   Field    Mode

Language

Halliday and Martin, 1993

Figure 2. The Functional Model of Language

20. Please explain the figure.

Inside the language itself, the SFL describes a model with three levels as a tristratal model of language (see figure 4). They are as follows:

1- *Discourse-Semantics* has three metafunctions. They are: Interpersonal metafunctions, Ideational metafunctions, and Textual metafunctions. (See figure 5).

2- *Lexico-grammar* includes both grammar and vocabulary in one stratum and represents the view of language in both lexis and grammar.

3- *Phonology, orthography (or graphology)* which refers to the sound system, the writing system, and the wording system (Eggins 2004, p.19).
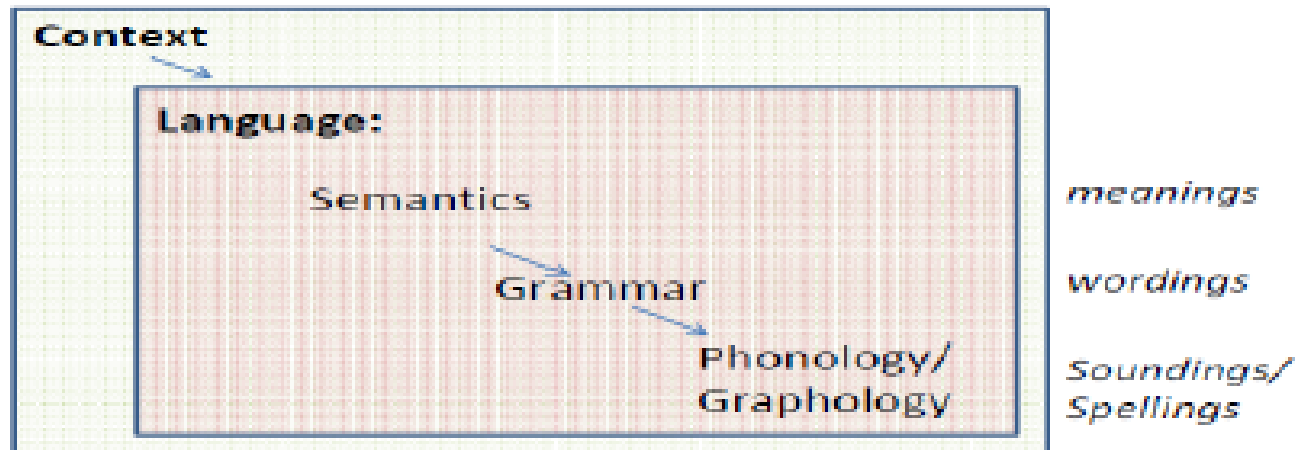
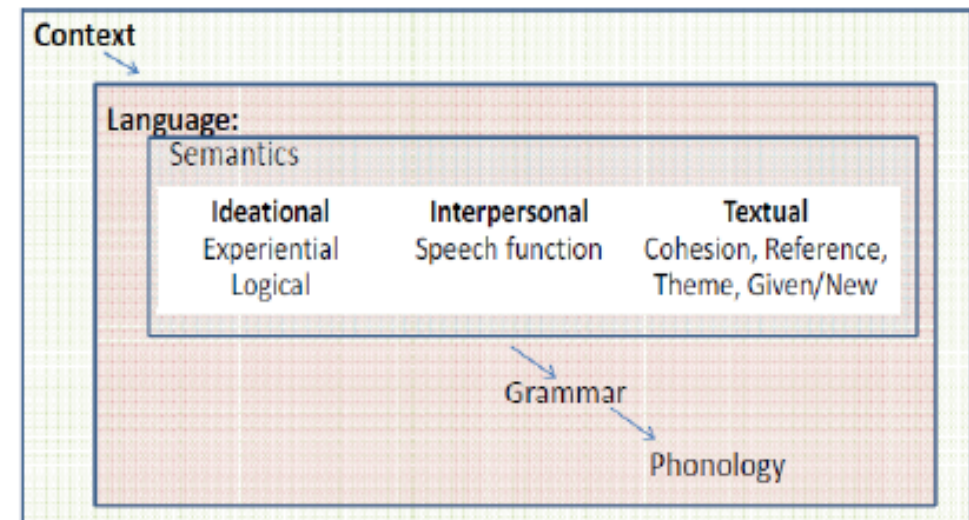Figure 4. Systemic Model of Language Strata

Figure 5. The Levels of Discourse-Semantics

Data from (figure 6) shows that SFL describes distinctive (sub)systems at both the level of lexico-grammar and the level of discourse semantics, which shapes the contextual variables in order to make the generalized meanings or metafunctions. Hence, the SFL model proposes that human language has evolved to make three generalized kinds of meanings; they are: Experiential meanings (clause as representation), Interpersonal meanings (clause as exchange), and Textual meanings (clause as message) (Eggins 2004, p.58-59).
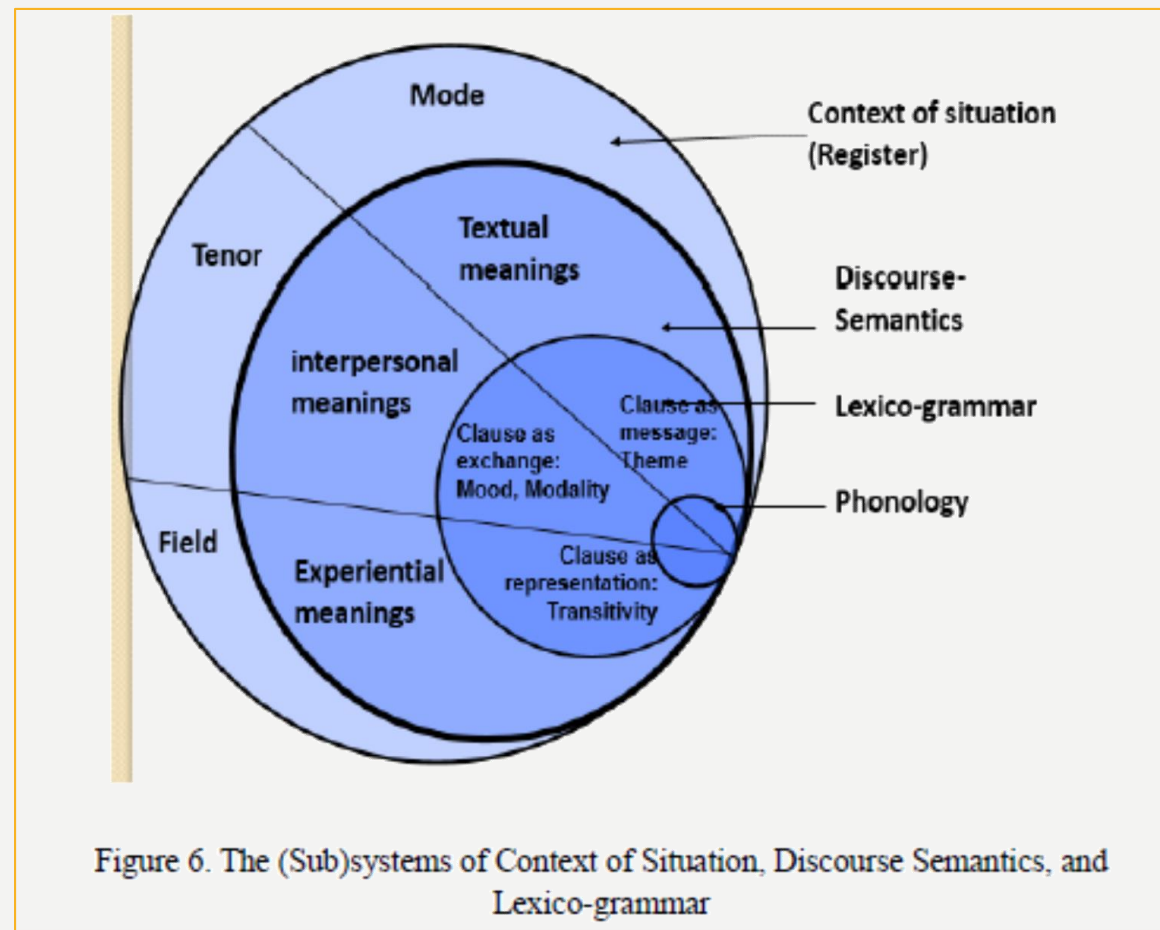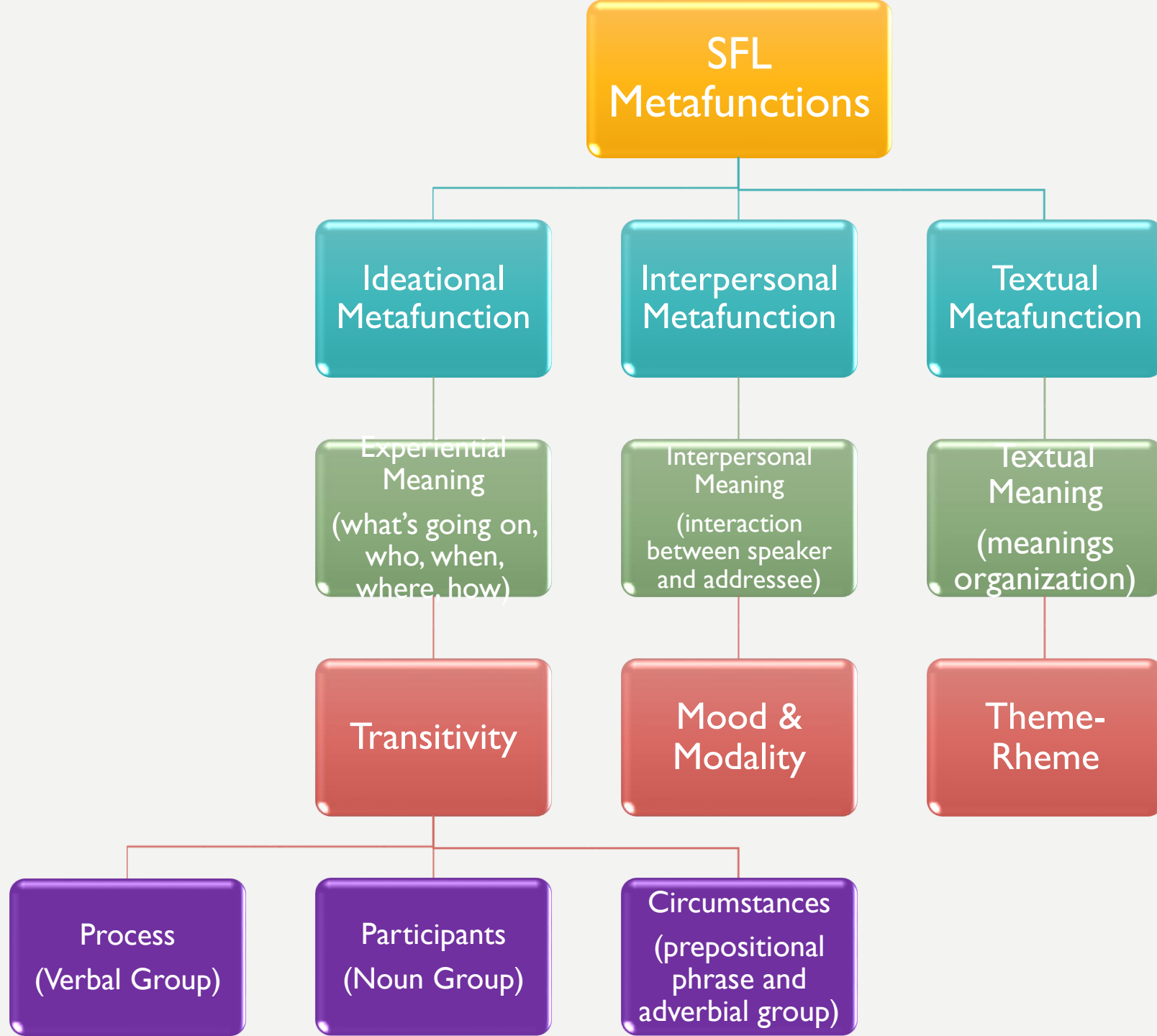


Figure 6. The (Sub)systems of Context of Situation, Discourse Semantics, and Lexico-grammar

1- *The Experiential meanings* are with the way reality is represented and the grammatical resources for construing our experience of the world around us, as to what is going on, who is involved in the going-on, and when, where, and how the goings-on are going on. One of its chief grammatical systems is classified as **Transitivity** (Matthiessen & Halliday 1997). Transitivity includes a number of aspects:

A- *The processes* [in the verbal group]

B- *The participants* (human/non-human) who are participating in these processes [in the noun group].

C- *The circumstances* in which the processes occur and the when, where, and how they take place [in the prepositional phrase and adverbial group]. For instance: [Circumstance] in the open glade [participant] the wild rabbits [Process] danced [circumstance] with their shadows (Matthiessen & Halliday 1997).

2- *The interpersonal meanings* are concerned with the interaction between speaker(s) and addressee(s). It is used to establish the speaker's role in the speech situation and relationship with others. One of its main grammatical systems is **Mood** and **Modality** (Matthiessen & Halliday 1997). For example: (see figure &)

3- *The textual meanings* are concerned with the creation of text and the way we organize our meanings into the text that makes sense. One of the main textual systems is *Theme* and *Rheme* (Matthiessen & Halliday, 1997). For instance: [Rheme] the wild rabbits danced with their shadows and [Theme] in the open glade.

| Sister Susie | 's | sewing | shirts | for soldiers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Subject | Finite | Predicator | Complement | Adjunct |
| Mood | | Residue | | |

Figure 7. Mood Structure.

Any Questions?

# TO DO LIST:

1 • Choose 3 questions from question number 10-20, and write your answer (typed is preferable).

2 • Write 2 questions that you may have during/after reading the article.

3 • Submit your answer in google classroom as attendance confirmation.

4 • For next material, please review the material you have learned in syntax (phrase, clause, sentence).

**Rissa San Rizqiya, M.Pd.**

**0856 0304 2036**

https://dosen.ikipsiliwangi.ac.id/materi/rissa-san-rizqiya/sfl/

A3: tsbgfxl    A4: dbxnspn

B1: tjlnlqq    B2: qmts4f4