

The M.A.K. Halliday Library Functional Linguistics Series

Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen

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Systemic Functional Insights on Language and Linguistics

 Springer

The M.A.K. Halliday Library Functional Linguistics Series

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This series focuses on studies concerning the theory and application of Systemic Functional Linguistics. It bears the name of Professor M.A.K. Halliday, as he is generally regarded as the founder of this school of linguistic thought. The series covers studies on language and context, functional grammar, semantic variation, discourse analysis, multimodality, register and genre analysis, educational linguistics and other areas. Systemic Functional Linguistics is a functional model of language inspired by the work of linguists such as Saussure, Hjelmslev, Whorf, and Firth. The theory was initially developed by Professor M.A.K. Halliday and his colleagues in London during the 1960s, and since 1974 it has held an international congress every year at various continents around the world. It is well-known for its application in a variety of fields, including education, translation, computational linguistics, multimodal studies, and healthcare, and scholars are always exploring new areas of application.

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Foreword

As one of Halliday's closest collaborators, Christian Matthiessen has made significant contributions to the development of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Since he first became acquainted with Halliday's work as a university student, he has devoted himself to the study and development of SFL theory, extended the scope of its applications and mentored students and junior scholars in many parts of the world. This collection of interviews with Christian Matthiessen brings us closer to his life and work, as well as his reflections and insights on a range of theoretical and applicable issues.

This volume, which consists of ten interviews, takes the reader through Matthiessen's life and work in different parts of the world to key conceptual issues in SFL and its application in computational linguistics, cognitive linguistics, language typology and translation studies. In the first part, Personal Histories, the interviewers focus on questions relating to Matthiessen's early interest in SFL, the connections and interactions between SFL and other schools of linguistics in the European and American traditions, most notably the Prague School and West Coast Functionalism. Through recounts of his experiences studying and working in Europe, the US, Australia and Hong Kong SAR, China, Matthiessen highlights the distinctive features of SFL and its contributions to our understanding of language. For me, it is particularly interesting to read his account of how he first became fascinated by Halliday's publications and decided to work on his mini-thesis *Hallidayan Linguistics* at Lund University, his very first meeting with Halliday at Stanford University, and then travelling every day for several hours from Los Angeles to attend Halliday's lectures at UC Irvine, and so on. I believe this excitement of "things finally clicked" on first encountering Halliday's work resonates with many of us working with SFL.

In the second part, Systemic Functional Linguistics and Its Applications, Matthiessen discusses some key conceptual issues in SFL by explaining the meanings of "systemic" and "functional", the different phases of development of SFL, the contributions of SFL to computational linguistics and text generation, the meaning-based approach to cognitive linguistics, language typology and description informed by SFL and translation studies. Apart from being an outstanding grammarian, who collaborated with Halliday in revising the *Introduction to Functional Grammar*,

Matthiessen has always been trying to enrich and develop SFL theory. In exploring the connections with other areas of research, Matthiessen emphasizes all along the importance of focussing on language and using SFL as a key resource. He argues, for example, that the only way to explain cognition is “by reference to language and other semiotic systems”. He also urges people working on translation studies to engage with language or language in context, which is “the most central phenomenon in translation”.

As Matthiessen once commented elsewhere, Halliday’s assumptions about language were “wide-ranging and proactive in nature”, and the significance of many of these remain to be further explored. I very much agree with Matthiessen on the importance of encouraging team-based research and enabling teamwork for the healthy and sustainable development of SFL.

The interviews are well structured with carefully prepared questions to bring out Matthiessen’s thinking on a broad range of issues. The engagingly dialogic style of this volume makes it much more accessible than Matthiessen’s other publications. For researchers, postgraduates and undergraduate students working in SFL, computation linguistics, cognitive linguistics, language typology and translation studies, these interviews will make essential reading. I feel privileged to be among the first readers of this volume, and I congratulate Christian Matthiessen and the three interviewers, Bo Wang, Yuanyi Ma and Isaac N. Mwinlaaru, on successfully putting this collection of interviews together.

As series editor of the M.A.K. Halliday Library Functional Linguistics Series, I am very pleased to have this welcome addition included, and I believe readers will enjoy reading it.

July 2020

Chenguang Chang
Sun Yat-sen University
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Preface

Our project of interviewing Christian Matthiessen started on September 30, 2016, in his office. By then, the three of us—Bo Wang, Yuanyi Ma and Isaac Mwinlaaru—had not yet graduated from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU). As doctoral students supervised by him, we have benefited tremendously from his lectures, face-to-face discussions and many insightful email exchanges. The idea of interviewing him sprung out of these interactions. They started as informal personal and intellectual conversations in his office at the Department of English in PolyU and, along the line, we decided to turn this into semi-formal interview sessions that could provide other researchers and students a chance of semiotic engagement with Christian Matthiessen on his ideas about language and linguistics.

We did not make much preparation. All we did was to brainstorm a list of questions, to bring our old camera purchased more than ten years ago, and to order a brand-new tripod from an online shop. We met him weekly throughout the semesters since 2016. By the end of 2017, we had graduated and Isaac Mwinlaaru had returned to Ghana. Bo Wang and Yuanyi Ma continued with the exchanges during their weekly visits to Hong Kong from Zhuhai to attend Christian Matthiessen's postgraduate lectures. Our collection of interview videos gradually expanded. So far, we have conducted 39 interviews with him, covering a wide range of topics. For this book, we select ten interviews from our inventory, including (i) some background information on Christian Matthiessen's life and work, (ii) his interpretation of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and (iii) his discussions on the applications of SFL. Many of the topics covered here reflect our individual research interest areas and biases. We also plan to upload the videos on YouTube and Youku. You may search for "Interviews with Christian Matthiessen" at the two websites to watch the videos.

We should also mention that some of the interviews have previously been published in journals. Chapter 1 on Christian Matthiessen's early interest in SFL was recast as a short report and published in *Functional Linguistics*. Chapters 8–10 have also been published in *Linguistics and the Human Sciences*. In preparing the interview transcripts for this book, we have invited Christian Matthiessen to revise and reword some of the content to make them more reader friendly, including the addition of figures and tables to clarify and extend some issues in the discussion.

There has been other back and forth editing between him and the three of us. Thus, the chapters embody characteristics of both spoken and written language in some parts.

We would like to thank Professor Huang Guowen and Professor Chang Chenguang for kindly including this book in their book series. We are also grateful to Rebecca Zhu, Carolyn Zhang and Vidya Shri Krishna Kumar from Springer for their generous help. We thank our friends and colleagues who helped us during the process of writing this book, including Dr. Pattama Patpong, Prof. Juliane House, Prof. Peter Fries, Prof. Fang Yan, Dr. Abhishek Kumar Kashyap, Dr. Mark Nartey and Dr. Zhang Yanan.

We thank Equinox Publishing for permission to reprint the three interviews previously published in *Linguistics and the Human Sciences*.

Zhuhai, China
Zhuhai, China
Cape Coast, Ghana
July 2021

Bo Wang
Yuanyi Ma
Isaac N. Mwinlaaru

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About the Authors

Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen is Distinguished Professor, University of International Business and Economics. He has degrees in linguistics from Lund University (BA), where he also studied English, Arabic and philosophy, and in linguistics from UCLA (MA, Ph.D.), and has previously held positions at USC/Information Sciences Institute, Sydney University, Macquarie University, and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. He has held visiting appointments at, e.g. the University of Hamburg and the Brain Science Division of the RIKEN Institute in Tokyo. He is Honorary Professor, Beijing Normal University, Beijing, the Australian National University, Canberra, and Guest Professor, University of Science and Technology, Beijing.

Matthiessen has been involved in major text-based research projects informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics since 1980, starting with the Penman project at USC/Information Sciences Institute, which produced a large-scale systemic functional grammar of English (the Nigel grammar). His research has covered a wide range of areas (all informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics), including analysis of many kinds of discourse, corpus compilation and corpus-based studies, register analysis and context-based text typology, the development of Rhetorical Structure Theory (jointly with Bill Mann and Sandy Thompson), the description of English and other languages spoken around the world, language typology and comparison, translation studies, multisemiotic studies, institutional linguistics, computational linguistics, the evolution of language, and systemic functional theory.

Matthiessen has authored and co-authored over 150 book chapters and journal articles. His books include *Text Generation and Systemic-functional Linguistics: Experiences from Japanese and English* (with John Bateman, 1991), *Lexicogrammatical Cartography: English Systems* (1995), *Working with Functional Grammar* (with J. R. Martin and Clare Painter 1997), *Construing Experience: A Language-based Approach to Cognition* (with M. A. K. Halliday 1999), *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar* (revised version of Halliday's book, with M. A. K. Halliday 2014), *Functional Typology* (edited, with Alice Caffarel & J. R. Martin 2004), *Continuing Discourse on Language* (edited, with Ruqaiya Hasan and Jonathan Webster, 2005 and 2007), *Systemic Functional Grammar: A First Step into the Theory* ([in English and Chinese] with M. A. K. Halliday, 2009, with an introduction by Huang

Guowen), *Key Terms in Systemic Functional Linguistics* (with Kazuhiro Teruya and Marvin Lam, 2010), *Deploying Functional Grammar* (with J. R. Martin and Clare Painter 2010), “System” in *Systemic Functional Linguistics: A System-based Theory of Language* (in press, with Equinox), *The Texture of Casual Conversation* (with Diana Slade, forthcoming, with Equinox), *A Guide to Systemic Functional Linguistics* (with Kazuhiro Teruya, forthcoming with Routledge), *Rhetorical System and Structure Theory: The Semantic System of Rhetorical Relations* (forthcoming), *The Architecture of Language According to Systemic Functional Linguistics* (forthcoming), and *Systemic Functional Linguistics, Part I* (2021), Volume 1 of *The Collected Works of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen*, in 8 volumes with Equinox, edited by Kazuhiro Teruya and team.

Bo Wang and Yuanyi Ma received their doctoral degrees from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Their research interests include Systemic Functional Linguistics, translation studies, discourse analysis and language description. They are co-authors of *Lao She’s Teahouse and Its Two English Translations: Exploring Chinese Drama Translation with Systemic Functional Linguistics* (Routledge, 2020), *Systemic Functional Translation Studies: Theoretical Insights and New Directions* (Equinox, 2021), *Translating Tagore’s Stray Birds into Chinese: Applying systemic functional linguistics to Chinese poetry translation* (Routledge, 2021) and *Introducing M.A.K. Halliday* (Routledge, 2022). Bo Wang is Lecturer at the School of Translation Studies, Jinan University, China. Yuanyi Ma is Lecturer at the School of International Cooperation, Guangdong Polytechnic of Science and Technology, China.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| AAAL | American Association for Applied Linguistics |
| AI | Artificial intelligence |
| AILA | Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée (International Association of Applied Linguistics) |
| AMH | Anatomically Modern Human |
| ANU | Australian National University |
| ASFLA | Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics Association |
| ATN | Augmented Transition Network |
| CA | Conversation Analysis |
| DALS | Doctor of Applied Language Sciences |
| DDG | Daughter Dependency Grammar |
| DTS | Descriptive Translation Studies |
| ESFLC | European Systemic Functional Linguistics Conference |
| ESL | English as a second language |
| FG | Functional grammar |
| FUG | Functional Unification Grammar |
| HPSG | Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar |
| <i>IFG</i> | <i>Introduction to Functional Grammar</i> |
| ISFC | International Systemic Functional Congress |
| ISI | Information Sciences Institute |
| KPML | Komet-Penman Multilingual |
| LA | Los Angeles |
| LACUS | Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States |
| <i>LASS</i> | <i>Language as Social Semiotic</i> |
| <i>LexiCart</i> | <i>Lexicogrammatical Cartography</i> |
| LFG | Lexical Functional Grammar |
| LMH | Linguistically Modern Human |
| LSA | Linguistic Society of America |
| MSA | Modern Standard Arabic |
| MT | Machine translation |
| PolyU | The Hong Kong Polytechnic University |

| | |
|------|--|
| RRG | Role and Reference Grammar |
| RST | Rhetorical Structure Theory |
| RTN | Recursive transition network |
| SFG | Systemic Functional Grammar |
| SFL | Systemic Functional Linguistics |
| SIL | Summer Institute of Linguistics |
| TAG | Tree Adjoining Grammar |
| TPR | Translation process research |
| UCB | University of California Berkeley |
| UCLA | University of California Los Angeles |
| UG | Universal Grammar |
| UNSW | University of New South Wales |
| USC | University of Southern California |
| UTS | University of Technology Sydney |
| WALS | The World Atlas of Language Structures |

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Part I
Personal History

Chapter 1

The Way into Systemic Functional Linguistics



Abstract This chapter discusses Christian Matthiessen’s early experience in linguistics and his motivations for working with Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). It also sheds light on the interaction between SFL and other schools of linguistics in the European and American traditions, and indicates the distinctive contributions of SFL to linguistics.

1.1 Introduction

This first chapter begins a series of interviews probing Christian Matthiessen’s experiences of linguistics from the 1970s to the early 2000s, focussing on the developments of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) within the ecology of the metalinguistic landscape of the period. The chapter provides a personal angle on contemporary developments in linguistics. It commences with Christian Matthiessen’s reflection on his early interest in language and his encounter with SFL in the 1970s. Notably, it discusses the nature of training and scholarship in linguistic science in Europe and the US in the 1970s and the 1980s and the contributions made to different aspects of linguistics by several scholars. Beyond the personal histories, this chapter also reflects on the distinctive characteristics of SFL, such as the paradigmatic orientation in the theory of language as a resource for making meaning, as well as the interaction between ideas in SFL and other functional approaches to language (e.g., Tagmemics, Glossematics and the Prague School of Linguistics).

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1.2 Christian Matthiessen's Early Interest in Systemic Functional Linguistics

Isaac Mwinlaaru: What motivated you to move into Systemic Functional Linguistics? How did you get to know about SFL, and why do you have an interest in this linguistic tradition and in pursuing this kind of research?

Christian Matthiessen: It is interesting to be given the opportunity to think back to the time when I first became aware of SFL and realized how central it was to my interests. This of course takes us back to the 1970s, which was a very different period of time in linguistics from now. One of the extraordinary differences is precisely the Internet and the technology that enables us to rapidly find out about a field. That was not possible at all in those days unless you had special connections, which was partly how I got into SFL.

My way into linguistics came early, when I was still in my mid-teens: by the time I started high school (Nicolaiskolan in Helsingborg¹), I had become interested in descriptions of language.² In high school, I liked reading more in-depth material in various subjects beyond what the curriculum required in terms of textbooks. This nudged me in the direction of linguistics even though my strand in high school was mathematics and natural sciences. On the one hand, I found that in physics, chemistry, mathematics, going beyond the textbooks was very hard, because I couldn't find the kind of intermediate material just a bit beyond the high school curriculum that would have been accessible to me; whereas with grammar, it was possible. But then, on the other hand, I was very dissatisfied with the kinds of grammar we were provided with in high school. I thought they were not systematic and not explanatory. That was another reason why I was prompted to read around. So I discovered certain linguistics books like Otto Jespersen's work on grammar (e.g., Jespersen 1924, 1933a) and also an introduction to Generative Semantics by a Swedish linguist, Alvar Ellegård (1971), whose book was very interesting because he took the aspects of grammar that were presented as arbitrary in traditional accounts, and explained them in terms of pseudo-semantic structures, drawing partly on predicate logic, which I learned about in another subject in high school—philosophy. I was lucky to have a very dedicated and enthusiastic philosophy teacher; he took us beyond the textbook, e.g., giving us a more in-depth account of propositional calculus and predicate logic and also introducing us to George von Wright's work, which developed some strands of his teacher Wittgenstein's insights.³ His deep engagement with philosophy was one of the reasons I went on to study it later at Lund University. In psychology, we

¹ <https://nicolaiskolan.helsingborg.se/skolan/>.

² Apart from my multilingual family background, this was, to a large extent, motivated by my German teacher in years 7 through 9, Birgitt Kronzell. As luck would have it, I had another brilliant teacher of German in high school (and of Swedish), Helge Jahn.

³ I think we were given excerpts from von Wright's book *Logik, filosofi och språk* (Logic, philosophy and language). Our teacher emphasized the significance of the fact that von Wright had written philosophical works in Swedish (although he was Finnish). Sweden did not stand out for its contributions to the history of philosophy. Later, when I studied philosophy at Lund University, I was told

also learned about meaning—interpersonal meaning; our teacher introduced us to Osgood's semantic differentials as a method of studying connotative meaning (e.g., Osgood 1964; Osgood et al. 1957), which in a way primed me for the work by Jim Martin and others in SFL on appraisal.

One day, our psychology teacher told us he would have a reunion with his classmates from high school and asked us if we would be happy to meet them and chat with them—I think it must have been the 30th anniversary of their graduation. We all agreed, and when the day came, I was completely taken by surprise to see my half-brother Tryggve Emond⁴ join the group. I had not known that he and my psychology teacher had been classmates! Tryggve and I didn't grow up together; he was born in the same year as Michael Halliday, and passed away one year before him. Tryggve also influenced my interest in philosophy; he had done a PhD thesis in aesthetics (Emond 1964), *On Art and Unity*, getting help from our father, Martin Emond, who was an artist. When I was old enough to appreciate it, he gave me a copy of his thesis; and his insights primed me for the later development of multimodal studies in SFL. One day, I hope I'll be able to translate some of his key insights into the systemic functional approach to visual art. Tryggve inherited our father's visual artistic potential (or PP, "painter potential"), unlike me—as far as I can tell; and he sketched and painted throughout his life, having his first public exhibition when he was 70. Tryggve's academic field, aesthetics, was considered part of philosophy, but, unluckily for him, no academic position in this area ever materialized in Sweden, and he worked as a lecturer at a high school in Lund, teaching philosophy, English and French. After retiring, he co-authored a textbook in philosophy for high school students, *Vad är filosofi* (What is Philosophy). It's excellent, and if I ever get the time, I'd like to translate it into English—after attempting to translate Vilhelm Moberg's play *Din stund på Jorden* ("Your time [or moment] on earth"), which I think should be part of the canon of world literature in the sense of the treasure trove of our extended human family's cumulative experience and wisdom. Speaking of translation (see Sect. 8.4), Tryggve and his family were again a source of insight, since three of them were very active in translation from English, French, Italian and Japanese into Swedish (cf. Matthiessen 2001).

But in any case, returning from this tangent, when I began to see grammar as essentially a construction of meaning, thanks in large part to Ellegård's work—at the time, still in syntagmatic terms—I was seriously impressed. Around the same time, I came across a book in Swedish (but translated into English as *New Trends of Linguistics*) by Bertil Malmberg (1969), who was the professor of linguistics at Lund University at the time. His book included a very interesting chapter on the European structuralist tradition—Saussure, Jakobson, Hjelmslev and European structuralism

that Sweden's only "contribution" to European philosophy was due to Queen Kristina: an enlightened scholarly monarch, she had invited Descartes to Stockholm, but her palace proved too cold and draughty for him during winter, and he died of pneumonia. She is said not to have cared for his kind of philosophy.

⁴ https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tryggve_Emond.

in general. That, to me, also seemed fascinating. I came to understand and appreciate the notion of the Saussurean sign and also the axial differentiation between syntagmatic and paradigmatic patterns. From Ellegård, I had the insight into the semantic underpinnings of syntagmatic grammatical patterns—into syntactic structures, including negatives as higher predicates and other analyses based on Generative Semantics. Then from Malmberg, I gained access to the European insights, which seemed very useful in the study of phonology (like Nikolai Trubetzkoy 1939a, b), and of lexical semantics (Jost Trier's 1931 field theory). But to me, these strands of insights coming from different traditions seemed incompatible; I could not see how they could be related to one another since I had no map of the overall territory of linguistics. Then, when I had to do an awful eleven months of military service in the Swedish air force as a guard soldier protecting a secret radar monitoring installation in the middle of nowhere, I entered university through a correspondence course. What kept me intellectually alive was this correspondence course in English linguistics,⁵ and then I got to do a bit more reading in linguistics, including John Lyons' (1968) *Theoretical Linguistics*—fascinating to me, but not exactly an accessible reading to someone fresh out of high school. But in any case, even when I arrived in the Department of Linguistics at the university, I still had the sense that I could not put these two insights together, i.e., the **syntagmatic** and **paradigmatic** insights.

Once I got into linguistics at the university, I started doing both English linguistics and General linguistics, and I also studied philosophy and began to learn Arabic in the Department of Oriental Languages. In linguistics in our Department and also more generally, the prevailing approach at the time was Chomsky's (Extended) Standard Theory, so the basic textbook for syntax was Akmajian and Heny (1975), a thick book introducing this theory, and it included little examples of how to write rules for tag questions, passive formation and so on. But we were encouraged to read around, and the Department was not dogmatic at all. Our Linguistics Department was housed in the former villa of the Rector Magnificus—the president or vice chancellor of the university. So, it was really like a home, with a large garden; and even as an undergraduate student, I felt included in a kind of academic family, which I think was helped by the fact that a number of our teachers were also PhD students, who shared their research topics and enthusiasm with us—Sven Platzack, Kenneth Hyltenstam, Christopher Stroud and Eva Larsson. I was invited to take part in a regular seminar called “diskuteket”, where researchers presented on a variety of topics; and I presented at two of them, one presentation being an overview of linguistic approaches to the analysis and modelling of negation.⁶ What used to be the huge formal dining room in the villa had been turned into a library—quite an extensive one. Even when I was an undergraduate student, I was allowed to stay there for hours, and I would just browse and browse late into the evening. That was

⁵ And also, our wonderful Alsatian guard dogs—a great sort of comfort as I traipsed around the spooky wilderness around the installation at night, going from one check point to another.

⁶ One of the participants, Sven Platzack's brother Christer Platzack, who was already an established academic, said to me after my negation presentation that it was “djävla bra”, literally “devilishly good”—high praise indeed in Swedish, at least at that time.

the equivalent of Googling topics, walking around the library and looking things up. As I said, we were encouraged to read around, so I read different approaches to language, different theories, and became familiar with Chomsky's theory. I was very disappointed because it had nothing to do with meaning. What I discovered later was that the version of Transformational Grammar I had met in Ellegård's book while I was still in high school was Generative Semantics, not Chomsky's version. In the library, I also came across other traditions, including Stratificational Linguistics, which seemed visually intriguing, and Tagmemics. We had a PhD student, Milan Bílý, who was from Czechoslovakia and represented the Prague School.

It was when I came across some writings by Michael Halliday that things finally clicked! The first work I came across was his collection of papers called *Explorations in the Functions of Language* (Halliday 1973), a very recent publication, when I encountered it. One of the things that clicked was that I suddenly saw the connection between the **European structuralist** insight into the differentiation of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes, and the ability to describe structure in a semantically transparent way. The connection was provided by Halliday's **system network** representing paradigmatic organization and the associated **realization statements** specifying (fragments of) structure, representing patterns along the syntagmatic axis in functional terms. I suppose I had a visual orientation, so the system network was very appealing to me. I sensed that I could map something out in terms of the paradigmatic organization. At the time, the network metaphor was nowhere near as prevalent as it is today as a model of organization (also now in the emergent discipline of network science, as in Barabási 2016); we were still largely in the era of trees, i.e., tree diagrams.⁷ But for me, the system network was a revelation—a gateway to a greater understanding of the organization of language. In hindsight, this is of course an indication of how helpful “multimodal” accounts of linguistic theory and description can be.

In addition, there were other nudges and pushes. At the time, in the Department of English of Lund University, there were two professors, one in English linguistics and the other in literature—the one in English linguistics had arrived fairly recently. For decades, English at Lund had been very well-known for historical studies of English—in particular, place name studies, which went back to the 1920s. But the new professor of the English language, **Jan Svartvik**, was a corpus linguist. He was famous as one of the team members of the grammars produced by Randolph Quirk and his team drawing on the **Survey of English Usage**, the major achievement being Quirk et al. (1985). In addition, Quirk and Svartvik collaborated on the development of the London–Lund corpus—the first extensive corpus of spoken English, which had been recorded by Randolph Quirk in London, and was given to Jan Svartvik and his team at Lund University to transcribe. Various PhD students were involved

⁷ Tree diagrams followed the tradition of representing syntagmatic composition vertically, with the “root” at the top (although tree diagrams were not used for a long time in the American Structuralist tradition, as noted and discussed by Seuren 1998). In contrast, system networks represent paradigmatic organization horizontally, laid out from left to right. Years later, Michael Halliday told me that he had, naturally, chosen this rotation intentionally to contrast the paradigmatic representation of organization with the established syntagmatic representation.

in this—I remember visiting them in an office created for the project in the old part of the university hospital, and they were also doing research based on this unique new corpus, published as Svartvik and Quirk (1980). One of the sources for this research into spoken English was Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan’s (1976) book *Cohesion in English*. Through their book, which really had an enormous impact since it provided researchers with a comprehensive resource for analysing patterns of cohesion in text, I also came across another aspect of SFL and the way it enabled the linking up of insights into grammar, discourse and discourse patterns. It was quite an exciting time.

Then, in 1978, Halliday (1978) published another collection of papers transformed into a book—*LASS (Language as Social Semiotic)*, and its appearance was very timely for me. As students in the Linguistics Department, we were encouraged to undertake and write up a project. I chose to do SFL, and I wrote a mini-thesis called *Hallidayan Linguistics*. To me, this was a fascinating undertaking involving a great deal of detective work, piecing together an account of SFL from a variety of sources because there were no overviews available. (At some point, I did get access to Margaret Berry’s (1975, 1977) two valuable volumes of *An Introduction to Systemic Linguistics*; but she had produced an overview essentially of scale-&-category theory, so I was struggling to relate her account to what I had read about the more recent developments—the concept of the **meaning potential** and organization in terms of **system networks** and the theory of **metafunctions**.) So I tried to do this in my account of *Hallidayan Linguistics*.

That was really the foundation, and I took it with me when I got the scholarship to study linguistics for a year at UCLA. Linguistics at UCLA was a totally different environment from linguistics at Lund University—no SFL at all, but certainly generative linguistics and early “**West Coast Functionalism**”, and very strong in **African linguistics**. That was exciting to me because I was very keen to learn more about various languages and to gain more insights into **language typology**. (During my first year at UCLA, 1979/80, I took a course with Bill Welmers that provided an overview of languages spoken in Africa (cf. Welmers 1973), which included the genetic classification ultimately based on Joseph Greenberg’s (1963) work,⁸ and I tried to learn Zulu during that year, taking a course taught by a wonderful poet from South Africa. Later, I did a one-year field methods course with Paul Schachter, where we worked on Akan). In those days, linguistics at UCLA was a very rich environment, and was very strong in phonetics with Peter Ladefoged, Ian Maddieson (e.g., Ladefoged & Maddieson 1996) and other members of the phonetics team. While phonetics wasn’t

⁸ I was already aware of and interested in Greenberg’s work on language typology; I had drawn on it in a course I taught in Linguistics, Lund University, in the first half of 1979. I was very happy when I had an opportunity to listen to Greenberg at a conference later in the 1980s. I remember a detailed comment he gave on evidence for the genetic classification of languages in one area in Africa presented in a talk based on observations of patterns in “word order”. Greenberg noted that such patterns are likely to change due to language contact, so they are not reliable as indicators of genetic relationships. This was related to something Michael Halliday had told me earlier when he suggested that patterns within the textual metafunction are likely to change due to language contact, citing English and Japanese as examples.

my main area of interest, the team was very high-powered and it was stimulating to be asked to do recordings for them of my dialect of Swedish; I think they were keen on my uvular r's /R/, which amused me a little because a speech therapist who met with all the students in my high school class wasn't happy with them—perhaps they had been influenced by my mother's North-German r's.

While linguistics at UCLA was extraordinarily rich and varied, there was nobody working with, or interested in, SFL. There was, in fact, an indirect connection: **Paul Schachter** had engaged very seriously with **Dick Hudson's** (1976) *Daughter Dependency Grammar* (DDG) (e.g., Schachter 1981); but while SFL was a major source for DDG, it had already moved in a different direction—understandably, since Hudson had set out to provide answers to Chomsky's questions about language using first SFL (Hudson 1971) and then DDG (Hudson 1976) as non-transformational alternatives to Chomsky's Transformational Grammar.⁹ When I talked to Schachter and Hudson about the connection, I found out that they had not met, and I remember being happy to be able to convey to them their mutual admiration for each other. Hudson had generously met with me a few times in the late 1970s when I had found cheap January flights from Copenhagen to London to enjoy the brilliant offerings at theatres there—grateful for opportunities to see plays with John Gielgud, Alec Guinness, Tom Conti, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., and Penelope Keith.

But then, in the second half of my first year at UCLA, by pure chance, I met **Michael Halliday**. Again, it was striking in those days that unless you were part of the network of academics, it was virtually impossible to find out where people were and what academic activities they were engaged in. I did not know where Michael Halliday was; all I had were hints from publications (e.g., he had written the foreword to *Cohesion in English* at Stanford University)—but I am sure I did not know that he had moved to Sydney University to take up the first chair in linguistics there. But during my first year at UCLA, I thought I should try to be an academic tourist and visit different universities. I made one trip from Los Angeles to Stanford University just to get a sense of what that famous university was like and what the campus was like—it turned out to be a beautiful campus. So, when I had arrived at Stanford University, I looked up a well-known linguist—Tom Wasow—in his office. He very kindly invited me in and talked about what they were doing in linguistics; and noting recent activities, and he showed me the programme of the special workshop on intonation. There were various well-known names like Dwight Bolinger, Ken Pike and Michael Halliday, so I said: “Wow, Michael Halliday was here?” Tom Wasow said, “yes, in fact, he is still with us, he's here as a visiting scholar”. He could tell that I suddenly got very interested, and then he told me Halliday was giving a series of lectures. He looked up the timetable of lectures. Amazingly, it turned out that Halliday was giving a lecture just at that time, one that would finish in about ten minutes, so I asked Wasow: “Where, where, where?” He told me, and I dashed out

⁹ Later Hudson developed Word Grammar (Hudson 1984), and by then he had, as he told me on an occasion when I met him in London, come around at a higher level to Halliday's richer and more well-rounded conception of language and of linguistics than Chomsky's, partly as a result of his project of producing a textbook on sociolinguistics (Hudson 1980).