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A diachronic analysis of Halliday's construal of semiosis: a semiotic lifeline perspective on academic writing development

This paper presents preliminary findings related to my doctoral research on language development in academic writing, in which I analyze diachronic variation in Michael Halliday's written language throughout his publishing trajectory. In this talk, my focus is on the ideational construal of knowledge about semiosis, the study of meaning, as unfolding in Halliday's collected works on grammar, ranging from 1956 to 2002 (Halliday, 2002). Analysis of ideational meaning concentrates on the system of TRANSITIVITY, seeking to reveal patterns in the participant status and process configuration of the experiential entity "meaning" at the clause rank. Also within the exploration of ideational meaning is the analysis of logical relations and nuclearity between elements at the clause complex rank (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). I apply the trinocular principle by considering subclausal realizations at the group rank, by applying paradigmatic reasoning around the clause and by linking clausal analysis with semantic and contextual variables. Interim findings suggest diachronic and cross-systemic differentiation in the construal of knowledge about semiosis in Halliday's work. Of special significance are patterns in the realization of intensive-identifying clauses construing definitions and the recurrence of elaborating sequences of attributive clauses in textual logogenesis. I finally discuss implications for the study of language development in academic writing, proposing a multistratal focus on specific experiential entities which allows thick characterizations of their ontogenetic unfolding.

References

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- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). Halliday's introduction to functional grammar. London and New York: Routledge.