Grammar Meets Genre:
Reflections on the 'Sydney School'

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Orientation

In this paper I'd like to look back over two decades of action research in which I have participated as a functional linguist. I say 'action research' because the enterprise involved an interaction of theory and practice which pushed the envelope of our understandings about modelling language in social life and which at the same time led to innovative literacy teaching across sectors in Australia and overseas. The work got under way in August 1979, at the Working Conference on Language in Education organised by Michael Halliday at the University of Sydney. I began teaching that same year in the MA Applied Linguistics program organised by Halliday in co-operation with the Faculty of Education—the first program of its kind in the southern hemisphere. These activities put me in touch with educators and their concerns, in particular with Joan Rothery, who has worked closely with me on several projects since that time, and with Frances Christie, whose contributions in terms of research, government reports, publications, conference organisation and pre-service teaching materials have been immense.[1]

In hindsight, the research can be divided into five overlapping phases, beginning with the Writing Project (1980–1985), which developed genre analysis as a way of thinking about the kinds of writing students undertook in primary and secondary school. Around 1986 our connection with the Metropolitan East Region

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of the New South Wales Disadvantaged Schools Program began, with what they called the Language and Social Power Project. As well as developing our work on genre in infants and primary schools, this project also concerned itself with pedagogy and came up with a distinctive teaching/learning cycle for introducing students to unfamiliar kinds of writing across the curriculum.[2] By 1990, thanks to Sue Doran's tireless enterprise, this DSP centre was able to mount a $2,000,000 research initiative called Write it Right, which extended the work into secondary school and three workplace sectors (science industry, media and administration). Around 1995 our work began to have a big impact on the mainstream curriculum, as the NSW Board of Studies designed their new English K-6 syllabus. Currently, the drift of research interests appears to be in the direction of multiliteracies, with an expanded focus on multimodal texts comprising image, sound and activity alongside language— and with a renewed concern for literacy in Indigenous communities in post-colonial contexts, particularly in South Australia and South Africa.

Of course, this is just my gaze, looking out from the confines of the derelict Transient Building where my Department is housed (*sic*). Lots of other work was going on, ever more so as graduates from our MA Applied Linguistics program, several of whom went on to do PhDs, returned to ground-breaking work across sectors. Throughout the 1980s, for example, the main partner for our work was the Queensland Department of Education, which at that time was developing the most forward looking language in education programs in the world. Similarly, throughout the 1980s and 1990s the NSW Adult Migrant Education Service worked intensively on curriculum and pedagogy for English as a Second Language teaching; their efforts were so impressive that they formed the basis of national curricula for teaching English to migrants. Similarly, what is currently known as the Learning Centre in this University worked through these years on programs for teaching academic English to migrant, and later all, university students; their EAP materials,

some of them developed in close co-operation with participating departments and faculties, are at the cutting edge of academic literacy teaching and regularly attract visitors and invitations from overseas. More recently, several of our colleagues have been involved in projects at the Australian Museum concerned with communication in exhibitions; the guidelines they have developed for text panels have brought international recognition to these initiatives,[3] and Maree Stenglin's brilliantly scaffolded materials for visiting school children are the best implementation of Bruner's spiral curriculum notion I have encountered.

By the early 1990s this accumulating body of work had earned a name, not that we gave it one ourselves. Instead, Green and Lee[4] introduced the term 'the Sydney School', in recognition of the instrumental role played by functional linguists and educational linguists in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Sydney. Ironically, by 1994 the name was already well out of date, since the research I'm outlining was being developed at all the metropolitan Sydney universities, at Wollongong University, at the Northern Territory University, at Melbourne University, and beyond. By 2000 the work has become an export industry, with centres in Singapore and Hong Kong and around Britain ('the empire strikes back', as it were). For better or worse, Green and Lee's christening was published in America, and has become the name by which our work is known.[5] It is not easy to get rid of, like all nick-names, especially where there is a grain of truth in them and they continue to serve the interests of those using the name—thus my reference in the title to the 'Sydney School', with scare quotes all around.

Pedagogy and curriculum

As an action research project concerned with literacy development, we had to be concerned with both pedagogy (how to teach) and curriculum (what to teach); as a functional linguist, my job was to access and design theory which could be used by educators to inform these tasks. As far as pedagogy was

concerned, our strategy was to look to work by Halliday[6] and Painter[7] on pre-school language development in the home and adapt their findings to institutionalised learning in school settings. The basic principle which we took from their work was that of 'guidance through interaction in the context of shared experience'.[8] This principle, which resonates with neo-Vygotskyan work on scaffolding, emphasises the leading role played by caregivers as they enable children to mean things with them in conversation in familiar familial contexts by way of preparing the children to take the initiative and mean these things on their own in less familiar settings. Painter[9] shows that talking about language plays a critical role in scaffolding of this kind, which reinforced our feeling that a shared metalanguage for talking about language was important for teachers and students in school. After some initial resistance, terminology for talking about genres was quickly adopted by teachers and students as a key resource for learning; resistance to appropriate grammar terminology to support these understandings continues to this day, about which I'll have more to say below.

Our work on curriculum was informed by our studies of grammar and discourse across genres. This work enabled us to specify primary literacy goals and secondary subject areas as a set of genres students were expected to master before moving on.[10] Beyond this, it enabled us to specify what kinds of understandings depend on other understandings, so that learning could be scaffolded in steps, with manageable gaps between levels and no need for repeat teaching of the same basic understandings year after year. I believe that this functional linguistic orientation to scaffolding provides a firmer basis for the implementation of spiral curricula than has been possible in literacy teaching over the years.

It is hard to know how best to reconstruct the social and political motivations for this work. My own experiences, visiting Brian Gray at Traeger Park School in Alice Springs, and my work with teachers at Lakemba public school, were certainly influential. At Lakemba, for example, I worked in classes where

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over 95 per cent of students were from non-English speaking backgrounds, mainly Arabic, with some Vietnamese. I came to realise that my 11-year-olds were often the oldest fluent English speakers in their families; but under the progressive process writing pedagogy then hegemonic in Australia, the only genre we could count on them having learned to write by the end of primary school was what we called an observation—a short piece of writing about something that had happened (for example, 'I went to the zoo. I liked the lion'.). Many students could not even write a recount. Here's one of my son Hamish's by way of illustration (it's not all he can write, by the way):

Taronga Park Zoo

Last Wednesday all Year 1 went to Taronga Zoo.
    First we went to have a lesson. We all saw a ringtail possum and the teacher showed us a koala's hand. We saw a great white shark's mouth and I saw a lion.
    We saw a peacock while we were having lunch and my Dad came to the Zoo with me and monkeys and a big gorilla and we saw zebra and a giraffe and I had a good time at the Zoo. I went back to school. I felt good.
    I liked the lion and the elephant and giraffe but the best thing was going on the train and the ferry and the bus and I felt good going back home and when I got back home I felt exhausted and we had a snack.

But if this is in fact all you can do then, (i) you can't really write across the curriculum in primary school, (ii) you aren't in very good shape for learning to read and write across subject areas in secondary school, and (iii) you're not in position to deal with your own family's literacy needs as far as dealing with private services and government agencies are concerned. I personally found this kind of literacy teaching socially irresponsible, and alongside like-minded people in the Disadvantaged School Program, we set out to do something about it.

    This is worth thinking about for a moment even if you aren't directly concerned with migrant, working class or Aboriginal children. Take for example the following text, written by Ben

Gibbons, then 8 years old, in 1988:

OUR PLANET

Earth's core is as hot as the furthest outer layer of the sun. They are both 6000c°.

Earth started as a ball of fire. Slowly it cooled. But it was still too hot for Life. Slowly water formed and then the first signs of life, microscopic cells. Then came trees. About seven thousand million years later came the first man.

Ben's teacher commented:

Where is your margin? This is not a story.

And on his picture of the planet, which accompanied his text, she wrote 'Finish please.' Ben's parents, John and Pauline, looked at the teacher's comments and were naturally quite upset. Ben had a keen interest in science and had obviously written a scientific account of the history of the planet (in less than a page; quite a feat!); but he was being evaluated as if he'd tried to write some kind of story and failed. His teacher, in other words, hadn't made it clear what was required, and criticised Ben for not having figured it out on his own. And this is a middle class child with both parents working in tertiary education! One can imagine what this kind of hidden curriculum does to non-mainstream children. In preparing for this talk, I decided to ask my colleague Pauline Gibbons what had become of Ben. Who knows, I thought—he might be studying romantic poetry for all I know; or did he really become a rocket scientist? She replied in August 2000:

... Ben is now in his final year at Sydney Uni doing biochemistry and psychology. Went to North Sydney Grammar and did mainly science subjects, hated English (though is a voracious reader and loves Shakespeare!) because he said they never told you the criteria on which assessment was done ... so it continues ...

Ben obviously learned his lesson and steered clear of evaluations based on implicit criteria. The critical point here is that he had the resources to steer clear; we were especially concerned with the kids who did not.

Genre

What is this thing called genre? Genre of course simply means a kind of something; and we all make use of a notion of this kind every time we enter a book shop or video store and find the shelf that has the kind of book (crime, fantasy, science fiction …) or video (drama, action, comedy …) we want. As functional linguists we interpreted genres from a semantic perspective as patterns of meaning.[11] As a working definition, we characterised genres as staged goal-oriented social processes—(i) staged, because it usually takes us more than one phase of meaning to work through a genre, (ii) goal-oriented, because unfolding phases are designed to accomplish something and we feel a sense of frustration or incompleteness if we're stopped, and (iii) social, because we engage in genres interactively with others. From this perspective, cultures can be interpreted as a system of genres—and there is no meaning outside of genres. Our law of genre was something like 'you cannot not mean genres'.

Let us take an example of the kind of text we worked on to illustrate this perspective. The story comes from Desmond Tutu's recent book *No Future without Forgiveness*, which is concerned with the truth and reconciliation process in South Africa.

> My story begins in my late teenage years as a farm girl in the Bethlehem district of Eastern Free State. As an eighteen-year-old, I met a young man in his twenties. He was working in a top security structure. It was the beginning of a beautiful relationship. We even spoke about marriage. A bubbly, vivacious man who beamed out wild energy. Sharply intelligent. Even if he was an Englishman, he was popular with all the 'Boere' Afrikaners. And all my girlfriends envied me. Then one day he said he was going on a 'trip'. 'We won't see each other again … maybe never ever again.' I was torn to pieces. So was he. An extremely short marriage to someone else failed all because I married to forget. More than a year ago, I met my first love again through a good friend. I was to learn for the first time that he had been operating overseas and that he was going to ask for amnesty. I can't explain the pain and bitterness in me when I saw what was

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left of that beautiful, big, strong person. He had only one desire—
that the truth must come out. Amnesty didn't matter. It was only
a means to the truth.

After my unsuccessful marriage, I met another policeman.
Not quite my first love, but an exceptional person. Very special.
Once again a bubbly, charming personality. Humorous, grumpy,
everything in its time and place. Then he says: He and three of
our friends have been promoted. 'We're moving to a special
unit. Now, now my darling. We are real policemen now.' We
were ecstatic. We even celebrated. He and his friends would
visit regularly. They even stayed over for long periods. Suddenly,
at strange times, they would become restless. Abruptly mutter
the feared word 'trip' and drive off. I ... as a loved one ... knew
no other life than that of worry, sleeplessness, anxiety about his
safety and where they could be. We simply had to be satisfied
with: 'What you don't know, can't hurt you.' And all that we as
loved ones knew ... was what we saw with our own eyes. After
about three years with the special forces, our hell began. He
became very quiet. Withdrawn. Sometimes he would just press
his face into his hands and shake uncontrollably. I realised he
was drinking too much. Instead of resting at night, he would
wander from window to window. He tried to hide his wild
consuming fear, but I saw it. In the early hours of the morning
between two and half-past-two, I jolt awake from his rushed
breathing. Rolls this way, that side of the bed. He's pale. Ice
cold in a sweltering night—sopping wet with sweat. Eyes
bewildered, but dull like the dead. And the shakes. The terrible
convulsions and blood-curdling shrieks of fear and pain from
the bottom of his soul. Sometimes he sits motionless, just staring
in front of him. I never understood. I never knew. Never realised
what was being shoved down his throat during the 'trips'. I just
went through hell. Praying, pleading: 'God, what's happening?
What's wrong with him? Could he have changed so much? Is he
going mad? I can't handle the man anymore! But, I can't get
out. He's going to haunt me for the rest of my life if I leave him.
Why, God?'

Today I know the answer to all my questions and heartache. I
know where everything began, the background. The role of 'those
at the top', the 'cliques' and 'our men' who simply had to carry

out their bloody orders ... like 'vultures'. And today they all wash their hands in innocence and resist the realities of the Truth Commission. Yes, I stand by my murderer who let me and the old White South Africa sleep peacefully. Warmly, while 'those at the top' were again targeting the next 'permanent removal from society' for the vultures.

I finally understand what the struggle was really about. I would have done the same had I been denied everything. If my life, that of my children and my parents was strangled with legislation. If I had to watch how white people became dissatisfied with the best and still wanted better and got it. I envy and respect the people of the struggle—at least their leaders have the guts to stand by their vultures, to recognise their sacrifices. What do we have? Our leaders are too holy and innocent. And faceless. I can understand if Mr (F. W.) de Klerk says he didn't know, but dammit, there must be a clique, there must have been someone out there who is still alive and who can give a face to 'the orders from above' for all the operations. Dammit! What else can this abnormal life be than a cruel human rights violation? Spiritual murder is more inhumane than a messy, physical murder. At least a murder victim rests. I wish I had the power to make those poor wasted people whole again. I wish I could wipe the old South Africa out of everyone's past. I end with a few lines that my wasted vulture said to me one night: 'They can give me amnesty a thousand times. Even if God and everyone else forgives me a thousand times—I have to live with this hell. The problem is in my head, my conscience. There is only one way to be free of it. Blow my brains out. Because that's where my hell is.' Helena.[12]

The overall staging of this story genre unfolds along the following lines. Once introduced by Tutu, the narrator, Helena, leads off by setting her story in time and place:

My story begins in my late teenage years as a farm girl in the Bethlehem district of Eastern Free State.

The story-line itself then unfolds in two main phases—in each Helena falls in love, her lover joins the security forces, and they face the repercussions:

first love

- falling in love As an eighteen-year-old, I met a young man
  …
- 'operations' Then one day he said he was going on a 'trip'.
- repercussions More than a year ago, I met my first love again …

second love

- falling in love After my unsuccessful marriage, I met another policeman.
- 'operations' Then he says: He and three of our friends have been promoted.
- repercussions After about three years with the special forces, our hell …

Helena then goes on to talk about the significance of these events—standing by your man, and spiritual murder. Finally she ends with a few lines from her 'wasted vulture', whose own anguish drives home the point of her moral tale.

Our work on story genres helps us place this genre in relation to other kinds of story and to give technical names to its stages. It begins with an Abstract, which Tutu uses to announce the story to be told. This is followed by an Orientation phase, which sets the story in time and place. This is followed in turn by phases of events unfolding one after another through time; Helena uses two phases of these, one for her first love and one for her second … Incident 1 and 2. Then there are two phases of Interpretation, which Helena uses to spell out the point of her story. And finally there is a Coda which she uses to reinforce her point and bring her story to a close.

Abstract

[The South Africa Broadcasting Corporation's radio team covering the Truth and Reconciliation Commission received a

letter from a woman calling herself Helena (she wanted to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals) who lived in the eastern province of Mpumalanga. They broadcast substantial extracts: ...]

Orientation

My story begins in my late teenage years as a farm girl in the Bethlehem district of Eastern Free State.

Incident 1

<u>falling in love</u>

As an eighteen-year-old, I met a young man in his twenties .... And all my girlfriends envied me.

'<u>operations</u>'

Then one day he said he was going on a 'trip' .... An extremely short marriage to someone else failed all because I married to forget.

<u>repercussions</u>

More than a year ago, I met my first love again through a good friend .... Amnesty didn't matter. It was only a means to the truth.

Incident 2

<u>falling in love</u>

After my unsuccessful marriage, I met another policeman ..... Humorous, grumpy, everything in its time and place.

'<u>operations</u>'

Then he says: He and three of our friends have been promoted .... And all that we as loved ones knew ... was what we saw with our own eyes.

<u>repercussions</u>

After about three years with the special forces, our hell began .... He's going to haunt me for the rest of my life if I leave him. Why, God?'

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Interpretation 1 ('stand by your man')

Today I know the answer to all my questions ..... Warmly, while 'those at the top' were again targeting the next 'permanent removal from society' for the vultures.

Interpretation 2 ('spiritual murder')

I finally understand what the struggle was really about .... I wish I could wipe the old South Africa out of everyone's past.

Coda

I end with a few lines that my wasted vulture said to me one night .... [']Blow my brains out. Because that's where my hell is.'

The Abstract, Orientation and Coda phases are shared across a number of story genres.[13] The distinctive stages here are the Incident and Interpretation, which characterise the genre we called exemplum. The purpose of an exemplum is to relate a sequence of events in order to make a moral point—and in this respect the genre is related to other moral tales such as fable and parable, and to gossip genres.[14] As we can see, the point of my son's trip to the zoo text is a very different one. His story, which we called recount, is designed to reconstruct experience and his reactions to that experience. It doesn't make a moral point, and doesn't really deal with problematic experience. Its purpose is to provide a record of what happened—for the benefit of people who may have in fact shared that experience or who are so close to Hamish that the everyday things he participates in really do matter. The different purposes of the exemplum and recount are reflected in the different patterns of meaning in the two texts. Globally this affects the staging structure; locally it affects a myriad of small-scale choices having to do with reconstructing and evaluating experience and sharing it with significant others.

Taking this one step further, Helena's exemplum is in fact part of another genre—an argument that Tutu is developing about the cost of justice in relation to the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission. Technically we refer to this genre as exposition and it functions to promote one side of an issue. (I am indebted to David Rose for the analysis developed here.)

Specifically, here Desmond Tutu is debating whether giving amnesty is just. To begin he poses this issue as a question:

> Issue   So is amnesty being given at the cost of justice being done?

He then develops three reasons as to why his answer to this question is 'No.' Tutu uses linkers *also* and *further* to guide us from one reason to the next; and each reason begins with a new paragraph.

> Argument 1 The Act required that where the offence is a gross ...
>
> Argument 2 It is **also** not true that the granting of amnesty encourages ...
>
> Argument 3 **Further,** retributive justice ...is not the only form of justice.

Each of these three reasons has two phases. In the first phase Tutu gives the grounds on which he is arguing, and in the second he reaches a conclusion on the basis of this evidence—each conclusion is introduced each time with the linker thus:

> Argument 1
> - grounds   the application should be dealt with in a public hearing
> - conclusion **Thus** there is the penalty of public exposure and humiliation
>   - **example [Helena's narrative]**
>
> Argument 2
> - grounds   because amnesty is only given to those who plead guilty
> - conclusion **Thus** the process in fact encourages accountability

Argument 3

- grounds   there is another kind of justice, restorative justice,

- conclusion **Thus** we would claim that … justice, is being served

Helena's story is in fact used by Tutu in his first Argument as an example of the effect that public exposure can have on perpetrators of gross human rights violations. And pushing further, just as Helena's exemplum is part of Tutu's exposition, so Tutu's exposition is part of a longer discussion of the cost of justice that begins by providing some background on relevant aspects of the act establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and continues by exploring the problem of reparation. We won't look at these extensions in detail here.

Our basic strategy was to analyse genres along these lines, and so factor out the writing needs of students across the curriculum in primary and secondary school, and for a few relevant workplace sectors. These understandings were used to reason about which genres students should be expected to learn, to plan when students should be introduced to which genres and how they could be developed, and to provide teachers and students with explicit terminology to refer to genres and their staging. Several primary English syllabi across Australia have drawn heavily on these perspectives, including English K-6 (NSW), English K-10 (Qld), Getting Going with Genres (NT) and First Steps (WA); and South Australia is currently revising its English syllabus in a similar direction.

Grammar: 'doing business with the clause' (as Hamish calls it)

By the mid-'90s controversy over the place of genre in English teaching subsided almost completely—partly because of the demonstrable utility of the ideas in literacy teaching, and partly because of a new controversy, fuelled by the print and electronic

media, over grammar teaching in schools. From my perspective the media's treatment of this issue was quite irresponsibly uninformed. Some tell me this is not unusual; but it was certainly distressing at the time, especially once politicians and colleagues entered the fray in an equally uninformed way. Early on the *Australian* published a news story describing functional grammar as being brought in to replace traditional grammar in schools, suggesting that new terminology would be used in place of old— participants instead of nouns, processes instead of verbs, circumstances instead of adverbs, and so on. In addition the NSW print media mounted a scare campaign around unfamiliar terms such as 'Theme', and terms like 'dictagloss', which are not actually functional grammar terms but which appeared in drafts of the new NSW English K-6 syllabus. Such was their level of ignorance that the editorial writers and commentators couldn't in fact recognise a functional grammar term when they encountered one. Phone calls, faxes, letters, letters to the editor and non-commissioned articles from my colleagues and me all went unheeded and unpublished in a farce of misinformation culminating in the Eltis report. Not surprisingly I'd like to clarify a few points here.

We'll work some more on Helena's narrative, but this time from the micro-perspective of the clause:

> As an eighteen-year-old, I met a young man in his twenties ….
> And all my girlfriends envied me. Then one day he said he was
> going on a 'trip'. 'We won't see each other again … maybe
> never ever again.'

In order to begin, we need to break this phase of her story down into clauses. There's more than one way to do this, but we don't really need to worry about that here. Basically below I've respected sentence boundaries (as signalled by initial capitals and full stops), treated relative clauses as part of other clauses (thus the square brackets around *who beamed out wild energy*), treated indirect speech as a separate unit and counted *maybe never ever again* as a distinct speech act:

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As an eighteen-year-old, I met a young man in his twenties.

He was working in a top security structure.

It was the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

We even spoke about marriage.

A bubbly, vivacious man [who beamed out wild energy].

Sharply intelligent.

Even if he was an Englishman,

he was popular with all the 'Boere' Afrikaners.

And all my girlfriends envied me.

Then one day he said

he was going on a 'trip'.

'We won't see each other again ...

maybe never ever again.'

Now, if genres are staged goal-oriented social processes, one might expect from a functional perspective that their pieces will construct experience, be interactive and stage information too. Rephrasing slightly, like texts, clauses are about something, they interact with someone, and they phase information. Let's look at these properties in turn.

In Helena's exemplum clauses are concerned with doing things, talking, feeling and describing:

- **clauses are about something ...**
  - **doing things**

    As an eighteen-year-old, I <u>met</u> a young man in his twenties.

    He <u>was working</u> in a top security structure.

  - **talking**

    We even <u>spoke</u> about marriage.

    Then one day he <u>said</u> he was going on a 'trip'.

  - **feeling**

    And all my girlfriends <u>envied</u> me.

    'We <u>won't see</u> each other again ... maybe never ever again.'

- describing

> It <u>was</u> the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

> Even if he <u>was</u> an Englishman,

> he <u>was</u> popular with all the 'Boere' Afrikaners.

Helena's clauses also interact—asking questions and making statements (illustrated here from her prayer):

- **clauses interact with someone ...**
  - **- questions (asking for missing information)**

    > 'God, <u>what's</u> happening?

    > <u>What's</u> wrong with him?

    > <u>Why</u>, God?'

  - **- questions (asking yes or no)**

    > <u>Could he</u> have changed so much?

    > <u>Is he</u> going mad?

  - **- statements (giving information)**

    > <u>I can't</u> handle the man anymore!

    > But, <u>I can't</u> get out.

    > <u>He's</u> going to haunt me for the rest of my life if I leave him.

Helena's clauses also organise information in ways that make it easier to digest. In the phase we began working on, Helena uses first position in the clause to orient us to time, and then orients to people; then she re-orients to time again, then back to people:

- **clauses phase information ...**
  - **- orienting to time**

    > <u>As an eighteen-year-old</u>, I met a young man in his twenties.

  - **- orienting to people**

    > <u>He</u> was working in a top security structure.

    > <u>It</u> was the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

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We even spoke about marriage.

A bubbly, vivacious man [who beamed out wild energy]

Sharply intelligent.

Even if he was an Englishman,

he was popular with all the 'Boere' Afrikaners.

And all my girlfriends envied me.

- **re-orienting to time**

    Then one day he said

- **re-orienting to people**

    he was going on a 'trip'.

    'We won't see each other again …

    maybe never ever again.'

The orientations to time move the story along from one phase to the next, whereas the orientations to people sustain our focus on our main protagonists—Helena and her love.

This functional perspective on what the clause is doing is a trinocular one.[15] It argues that we can't really understand the meaning of a clause unless we look at what it is about, and how it interacts and how it organises information. In functional grammar analysis we're trying to focus on the meaning of the clause—on how it is constructed to make meaning. And to do this, we have to gaze at the clause from three different, and complementary points of view. In this trinocular perspective, grammar is about reconciling these three strands—weaving them seamlessly together into the messages we make.

This brings us to the problem of labelling—how do we name the parts of the clause in such a way that our naming reflects the three kinds of meaning going on? In functional linguistics one part of the answer to this is make use of two kinds of labels: (i) labels which tell us what something is and (ii) labels which tell us what something is doing. The labels which tell us what kind of thing something is are called class (sometimes category) labels; the best known examples of labels of this kind are the so called

parts of speech of traditional school grammar, including noun, verb, adjective, preposition and other terms people have heard of even if they don't know what they mean (the kind of thing the Eltis report refers to as 'conventional' terminology). The labels which tell us what something is actually doing are called function (sometimes relation) labels; the best known of these are Subject and Object, although once again we need to stress that familiarity with these terms does not usually entail the ability to pick them out in a clause. The reason that people are no longer able to use 'conventional' terminology of course is that for a generation progressive educators argued that knowledge about grammar was both useless and harmful as far as language learning was concerned; educators took this on board, especially in Australia, and by and large stopped teaching grammar completely. This was unfortunate. To my mind the one kind of grammar that's worse than traditional school grammar is no grammar at all.

Let us have a look at these two kinds of labelling in relation to some of the clauses we picked out above, beginning with the kinds of experience clauses are on about ... for example action, feeling and description.

action   I met a young man
feeling   all my girlfriends envied me
description   he was an Englishman

In the tables below I've used class labels in the second row to name the kinds of word we find in each example. In the third row I've given the work done by each part of the clause an informal gloss to bring out the contribution it makes to the meaning of the clause. Then in the bottom row I've used the actual function labels suggested in Halliday[16]—labels which are becoming a kind of *lingua franca* for discourse analysts and applied linguists around the world. In the action clause table for example I've labelled the pronoun *I* which is the doer in the clause the Actor, the verb *met* which is the doing element the Process, and the noun *man* which is affected by the process the Goal. Different function labels are used for feeling and description.

- **action**

	I	*met*	*(a young) man*
Part of speech	pronoun	verb	noun
	'doer'	*'doing'*	*'affected'*
Function	**Actor**	**Process**	**Goal**

- **feeling**

	(my) girlfriends	*envied*	*me*
Part of speech	noun	verb	pronoun
	'feeler'	*'feeling'*	*''stimulus'*
Function	**Senser**	**Process**	**Phenomenon**

- **description**

	he	*was*	*(an) Englishman*
Part of speech	pronoun	verb	noun
	'described'	*'state'*	*'description'*
Function	**Carrier**	**Process**	**Attribute**

The same noun^verb^noun sequence can have different meanings, and these are reflected in the function labels assigned:

Actor   Process Goal
Senser   Process Phenomenon
Carrier Process Attribute

This means that the functional labelling is much richer semantically than the class labelling, and so more meaningful in discourse analysis. If genres are treated as patterns of meaning,

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then to make grammar analysis relevant to genre we need to deploy a grammar that focuses on meaning. The class labelling is just too general, too vague to do the job.

Turning to clause as interaction, we can draw on the same set of class labels, but our function labels will be different since now we're looking at meaning of a quite different kind—the difference between asking for and giving information, and the two different kinds of information we ask for.

polarity question	Could he have changed so much?
statement	I can't handle the man anymore!
information question	What's happening?

For these meanings, labels for the two parts of the clause that show the difference between questions and statements are crucial. Notice how Helena prays *Could he*, putting the verb before the noun when asking, but says *I can't*, putting the noun before the verb when stating—the sequence makes the difference. In the third example, Helena is looking for missing information, and uses a special question word *what* to signal what she's looking for.

- **description**

	Could	*he*	*have changed …*
Part of speech	auxiliary verb	pronoun	verb
	'terms'	*'nub'*	
Function	**Finite**	**Subject**	-

- **statement**

	I	*can't*	*handle …*
Part of speech	pronoun	auxiliary verb	verb
	'nub'	*'terms'*	
Function	**Subject**	**Finite**	-

- **information question**

	What	's	happening
Part of speech	noun	auxiliary verb	verb
	'content sought'	'terms'	
Function	**Wh/Subject**	**Finite**	-

Halliday uses the terms Subject and Finite to refer to the parts of the clause that typically make the difference between stating and questioning according to their sequence. The term Wh is used to signal missing information, in this case the content of the Subject—which is why the noun what is labelled twice (Wh/Subject); the term Wh reflects the fact that in English this kind of question word begins with 'wh' (*who, what, which, when, where, why*), except for *how*, which gets the 'w' and 'h' the wrong way round.

Semantically, the traditional term Subject refers to the nub of the argument (the part of the clause that is at risk in debate: *could he/I/she/my first love/my second love/South Africa ...*) and the term Finite refers to the terms of the argument—either tense (past, present, future: *did/is/will he ...*) or modality (probability, ability, inclination, obligation: *could/might/would/should he ...*).

Wh 'what we're looking for'
Subject 'the nub of the argument'
Finite 'the terms—time, probability, ability ...'

Turning to clause as message, the main factor we'll consider here is what comes first, since first position in the clause is where English does a lot of the work on fitting clauses smoothly into texts as they unfold. One important opposition here is between usual order (Subject first in statements) and unusual order (something coming before the Subject in statements).

unusual order As an eighteen-year-old, I met a young man in his twenties.

usual order   <u>He</u> was working in a top security structure

As noted above, unusual order tends to be associated with transitions in discourse—in Helena's story from one phase of activity to another. Usual order on the other hand tends to be associated with continuity of focus within a phase. Halliday[17] refers to content coming before the Subject in statements as marked Themes, and clause initial Subjects as unmarked Themes.

- **unusual order** [in English, something before the Subject]

	As an eighteen-year-old	*I*	*met ...*
Part of speech	prepositional phrase	pronoun	verb
	'angling on when'		
Function	**marked theme**	**(unmarked theme)**	-

- **usual order**

	He	*was working ...*
Part of speech	pronoun	verbs
	'angling on who'	
Function	**(unmarked theme)**	-

Marked Themes are less common in most genres, and tend to shift our orientation to what we're talking about. Chains of unmarked Themes tend to sustain our orientation—on the main protagonists in Helena's story, for example.

marked Theme   'shifting our orientation'
unmarked Theme 'sustaining our orientation'

As we can see, trinocular vision means a lot more labelling than we find in most grammars. Alongside the parts of speech we have three sets of function labels, which enable us to focus

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on the content of the clause, its interactivity, and its information flow. The pay-off is that the extra labelling allows us to interpret the function of the clause in discourse, and so understand how small scale choices are co-ordinated to make the larger social meanings we call genre. Patterns of Theme for example are a key resource for signalling the phases and transitions we discussed in relation to the generic staging of Helena's story above. We won't attempt a complete analysis here, but simply pause a moment to replay the information flowing through the Theme choices we've just looked at in detail. Labelling just the parts of speech in narrative tells us nothing about unfolding texture of this kind; just as it tells us almost nothing about what happened to Helena and her loves, and almost nothing about the way she engages God in her prayer.

- Marked Theme orienting to time

<u>As an eighteen-year-old,</u> I met a young man in his twenties.

- Unmarked Themes orienting to people

<u>He</u> was working in a top security structure.

<u>It</u> was the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

<u>We</u> even spoke about marriage.

A bubbly, vivacious man [who beamed out wild energy].

Sharply intelligent.

<u>Even if he</u> was an Englishman,

<u>he</u> was popular with all the 'Boere' Afrikaners.

<u>And all my girlfriends</u> envied me.

- Marked Theme re-orienting to time

<u>Then one day</u> he said

- Unmarked Themes re-orienting to people

<u>he</u> was going on a 'trip'.

'<u>We</u> won't see each other again …

maybe never ever again.'

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As we've just illustrated, functional grammar makes use of both class and function labels and thus provides an excellent forum for considering the merits of conventional and 'new-fangled' labelling in grammar analysis. We know from pioneering research by Geoff Williams and Joan Rothery[18] that function labels are no problem for students, beginning in infants school. At the same time, we have to acknowledge the fact that the new labels are threatening to many teachers and parents, especially those who haven't studied grammar of any kind in their own experience of schooling. So much money has been withdrawn from education in Australia, especially public education, over the past 20 years that resources for introducing new ideas to teachers are negligible. Governments fund the development of new syllabi across subject areas; but they're not prepared to fund the in-service training required for teachers to implement them. Functional grammar is not the problem; Australia has a wealth of expertise and experience to draw on as far as getting functional terminology up and running in schools is concerned. The problem is funding, and behind this the shameful anti-intellectual, anti-academic attitudes to education which make it impossible to cash in the innovations for which we are internationally renowned. It is a national disgrace when new knowledge which has the potential to be of immense benefit has to be suppressed because we're not prepared to invest in it. It's a familiar story—and of course where we don't invest, someone else will, and take advantage elsewhere of something that could have given 'Aussie Aussie Aussie Oi! Oi! Oi!' land the edge in an ever more competitive world—a post-colonial economy where local knowledge is the resource we need to win medals instead of just stumbling along with information we import from overseas.

One final point I'd like to make about grammar, before moving on, is that we need to keep an eye on what testing does with conventional grammar as it is reintroduced into schools. Traditionally, school grammar has been used to police the ways in which students use language. It gave rise to rules—such as ... :

It's wrong to carelessly split infinitives.

A preposition is something you should never end a sentence with.

And you must never begin a sentence with a conjunction.

The way in which students write and speak was checked against these rules, even though they don't have much to do with the way people actually use their language. I broke every one of them as I spelled them out above, and used perfectly grammatical English to do so. What these rules actually ended up doing was evaluating written language as right and spoken language as wrong, and worse than this, evaluating middle class Anglo educated English as right and working class, migrant and Aboriginal English as wrong.

Over time the rules were expanded to include things like injunctions against so-called double negatives and a distinction between singular and plural in second person pronouns. So that when Jeff Fenech, the former boxing champion from Marrickville, said *If you don't get no bums on seats you don't get paid* or *I love yous all*, his dialect of inner west migrant English became a target of derision for some—a measure of his lack of education, stupidity, laziness, illogicality or whatever. At the same time it endeared him to others as a kind of working class hero, a battler succeeding against the odds. But in fact, Jeff's negatives are no more double than those in standard English; it's just that he uses the determiner *no* where standard speakers use *any*. In neither case does the second negative cancel the first one out; in both cases the second negative simply flags the domain of the negation. Putting this more technically, in both dialects the negative Finite function controls the form of indefinite determiners in the scope of the argument:

non-standard If you do<u>n't</u> get <u>no</u> bums on seats (<u>no</u>where) …

standard　　If you do<u>n't</u> get <u>any</u> bums on seats (<u>any</u>where) …

Similarly, there's nothing lazy or illogical about Jeff's distinction between *you* and *yous*. He systematically uses *you* to address one person and *yous* to address more than one (e.g. a

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crowd of fans), a distinction every English speaker made when we still had *thou* and *you* in our pronoun system (as a glance at Shakespeare reveals). Standard English dropped the distinction; Jeff maintains it, that's all. Even if we were misguided enough to apply logicality as a measure, then Jeff's usage would turn out to be more logical than that of standard speakers, not less.

Now, my point here is that my own children have grown up in Marrickville speaking this dialect of English. And they have parents who can point out to them when to use it and when not. But I don't want them discriminated against for the suburb they grew up in when they get it wrong, any more than I'd want any child to be treated in this prejudicial way.

Over time, prescriptive rules of the kind I'm describing lost their grounding in traditional grammar, as people stopped learning what traditional grammar was. The rules mutated into nonsense, such as the following:

> Never end a sentence with a proposition.
>
> Avoid the passive tense.

As we've seen, it's preposition, not proposition; but when no one understands the meaning of a conventional term like preposition even though they might have heard of it, then rule turns to farce. Similarly, there's no such thing as a passive tense; there's active and passive voice, and past, present and future tense. Even where we tidy things up, and come up with injunctions like 'Vary your sentence beginnings' and 'Avoid the passive voice' we're still left with rules that don't make sense as we move from one genre to another. In many genres sentence beginnings (i.e. Themes) are relatively constant, and passive voice is used precisely to achieve this effect. Rhetoric of this uninformed order is worse than useless, since it's not based on relevant understandings of grammar in relation to genre.

I'm reminded here of a recent debacle reported on Channel Nine's *A Current Affair*—'The Affect/Effect Affair'. A teacher was confused about which of *affect* and *effect* was the noun or verb (it's *affect* verb, *effect* noun by the way, except for one

formal meaning of *effect* 'succeed in causing to happen'), or was perhaps unable to recognise the noun or verb in the sentence he was policing. He marked the student wrong, suggesting *affect* for *effect* or vice versa (I can't recall which). Anyhow, as it turned out, the student had been right; the teacher got it wrong. Indignant, the student dobbed the teacher in to the Department of Education and the media, with *A Current Affair* running the story in their 6.30–7.00 evening slot. 'What on earth is the world coming to when teachers don't know grammar anymore!' This story underlined for me the futility of suggesting that conventional terminology be used instead of functional terminology in a system where conventional terminology is scarcely understood at all.

Traditionally, then, conventional terminology became an instrument of prejudice and as I look over current tests and grammar exercises from the public and private sectors in NSW I find evidence of precisely this form of discrimination coming round again. At the beginning of a new millennium we can't afford to allow this kind of grammar teaching to rise up again. We have to be more careful. Conventional terminology is next to useless as far as thinking about genres is concerned; it doesn't help you master the social processes you need to get through school and into the workforce. But it's not likely it's going to just sit around doing nothing in schools; it will tend to be used— in the ways it used to be used—as the instrument of prejudice I've just described. This is worse than shameful; it's a violation of human rights. Human rights conventions, not grammar conventions, are the conventions we should all have kept in mind.

Controversy

Throughout the phases of research I'm discussing here, our work has been controversial. It challenged and continues to challenge current understandings of teaching and learning in relation to literacy teaching and learning across the curriculum, across sectors. In one sense this testifies to innovation—change is never

comfortable, especially where it involves retraining in a system that does not allocate resources for retraining. Change in this kind of environment frightens people. That's understandable enough. At the same time, over the years I have been struck by the vehemence of the opposition, which has often seemed out of proportion to the suggestions we were making. Buttons were pushed and people went over the top, in public, in ways that probably surprised even themselves. I'm not talking about insignificant altercations here. People lost their jobs over these ideas, and where they didn't they had to work in extremely stressful work environments in which their contributions were not valued and in which many worthwhile practices that were proposed were actively undermined. Such is life, I suppose. But it always seemed to me there must be something deeper going on.

To explore this a little I'd like to draw on some relevant sociology and cultural studies—on the work of Basil Bernstein and Anne Cranny-Francis in particular, since these are the two scholars who have influenced me most deeply as far as unravelling these issues is concerned. Neither are easy theoreticians to work with, for complementary reasons. Bernstein's work on the sociology of education is highly theoretical, with only occasional exemplification. I struggle to understand him until I can ground his ideas in the day to day issues and arguments I'm involved in, and then, eureka, so much is revealed. Cranny-Francis on the other hand embeds her theory deeply in her readings of the discourse she's deconstructing, so much so that it takes me a real effort of interpretation to abstract the theory from the readings and deploy it in adjacent sites. But once I've done so, once again the effect is illuminating, searing deconstruction—as I'll try to demonstrate here.

First, Bernstein.[19] Almost uniquely among sociologists, Bernstein makes a place for language in his theory—as part of the materialisation of the social order across modalities. His particular focus was on education, and the relation of social class to success and failure in school. The insights which I found most revealing have to do with his suggestion that ongoing

struggles over curriculum and pedagogy in schools were in fact class struggles between two dominant fractions of the middle class, which he refers to as the old and new middle class. In his own words (my formatting) ...

> The basic fractions of the middle class which interested me were ...
>
> • that fraction which reproduced itself through ownership or control of capital in various forms [old middle class]
>
> • and that fraction which controlled not capital but dominant and dominating forms of communication [new middle class].
>
> The latter group's power lies in its control over the transmission of critical symbolic systems: essentially through control over various forms of public education and through control over what Bourdieu calls the symbolic markets.[20]

Which means of course that in spite of rhetoric to the contrary, curriculum and pedagogy evolving from this struggle will be in the specialised interests of fractions of middle class students:

> The major argument of the paper, then, is that conflicting pedagogies have their origins within the fractions of the middle class and so an unreflecting institutionalisation of either pedagogy will not be to the advantage of the lower working class.[21]

By either pedagogy, Bernstein is referring to traditional and progressive pedagogy, which he associates with the old and new middle class respectively. For Bernstein, traditional pedagogy is a visible pedagogy—the teacher is an authority (an authoritarian at worst) and it is clear what is being learned and what the criteria are for its evaluation; progressive pedagogy is an invisible pedagogy—the teacher is benevolent, encouraging students in their pursuit of thematic interests and rewarding them when they make progress with the things she judges them ready for. Traditional pedagogy is associated with traditional school grammar teaching; progressive pedagogy is associated with no grammar teaching (referred to euphemistically by its gurus as 'grammar at point of need', but we know from experience that this means no grammar at all).

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'old middle class'

traditional pedagogy ('visible')

- authoritarian
- step by step progress
- explicit criteria for assessment

'new middle class'

progressive pedagogy ('invisible')

- benevolent
- pursuit of interests (themes)
- implicit criteria for assessment

Now it stands to reason that if one is entering this struggle, then sparks will fly. We had to weather a double whammy since our pedagogy built on some of the strengths of both traditional and progressive programs; it was not unusual to be attacked by progressives as traditionalists and by traditionalists as progressives in the same day. Neither the old nor new middle class were too impressed with where we were coming from. On top of this, our programs involved explicit knowledge about language (KAL as our colleagues in Britain call it)[22] in relation to both grammar and genre. For traditionalists KAL was fine, but we were using the wrong kind of KAL; we should have stuck with the tried and true. For progressives KAL was out of order; their complete misunderstanding of language development entailed a commitment to the idea that metalanguage was an impediment to or had a negligible effect on language learning. Small wonder then that time and again all hell broke loose—in the '80s mainly over genre, in the '90s mainly over functional grammar.

I think our problem here was that alongside our colleagues in the DSP we were dedicated to reflectively institutionalising a literacy pedagogy that was in the interests of working class, migrant, and indigenous students. And our own varied backgrounds reflected this. Far more often than not I was the only academic, the only linguist, the only male, the only heterosexual,

the only Anglo (apparently; my Celtic genes are shuddering), the only Protestant or the only middle class person in a team of language educators developing practices informed by a functional model of language—and I'm a migrant myself, who arrived in Australia on a very hot day in January 1977 after growing up in a tiny Anglo-Irish fishing village in Canada where my Dad worked as a marine biologist before taking me to Ottawa in my teenage years. Glancing round it was easy to see that everyone in our team was dislocated somehow—by class, ethnicity, gender, generation, migration, whatever. We were a new force that neither the old nor new middle class had confronted before, and we had a powerful new technology, functional linguistics, to put to work in the interests of non-mainstream students. We were brave and tough and we rocked the boat and took the flak and did manage to turn things round. I think this was a remarkable episode in the history of language education, one that would more than repay analysis by sociology or cultural studies or whoever else is interested in real positive change—as opposed to those who treat deconstruction as a cynical critique designed to mock and undermine and in effect reaffirm the indomitable power of the hegemonic status quo in the face of what they denigrate as hopelessly naive sorties such as ours.

Basil Bernstein died while I was writing up this paper, and on behalf of all my colleagues I want to thank him here for the extraordinary insight he's given us over the years. I like to think that one way his ideas will live on and grow is through our work, and that whatever we achieve will honour him in one small measure in relation to all that he deserves. Thanks then to a special soul-mate—much loved, sorely missed, always remembered. Rapacious wit; scintillating intellect; endearing humanity—a truly adorable and deeply wounded seer. Bye-bye Basil. I dedicate this paper to the memory of you.

Cranny-Francis is an Australian scholar, who works in Critical and Cultural Studies at Macquarie University. In the paper I'm drawing on here she is examining the development of Cultural Studies as a discipline, and its evolution in the English

Department at Macquarie in particular, culminating with its establishment as a distinct thriving department in a separate division from English over time. In particular she is concerned with the nature of overdetermined reactions such as those I discussed above, which she deconstructs as the paranoia of a secret revealed (my formatting):

> Paranoia is often said to be the result of powerlessness, helplessness in the face of forces controlling one's life that are unknown and unknowable—the suits of The X-Files, the 'alien within' of 50s McCarthyism. [But] In this case study English should not have felt helpless or powerless as it enjoys major institutional support … [Rather] this paranoia … is the paranoia of a secret revealed.
>
> The biggest secret of traditional English, after all, is that there is a secret—which is, that English is not the transparent, politically innocent practice it often represents itself to be. Of course, lots of people know this secret … but the crucial point is that the secret is not officially acknowledged.
>
> Paranoia can be read as a symptom ... But paranoia is more than that. As I hope this case study suggests, it is damaging, hurtful, and can be consuming for those trapped within it. It is not simply ridiculous that English is hoist on the petard of its own disciplinary secret—any more than it is ridiculous that we, in Australia, saw a swing to the right in the last national election as the result of paranoia deliberately created by the conservative government in power. And the fact that the paranoia elicited in this case can also be traced to a well-known, but not officially acknowledged, secret—the systemic abuse of indigenous peoples—does not make it any less effective or real in its consequences.
>
> In conclusion, then, what this study of Cultural Studies and institutional paranoia shows is … that paranoia is scary … it's a disturbing symptom of the burden of a secret that cannot be officially acknowledged to exist, even when it is public knowledge. It militates against the recognition of difference, and of the specificity and plurality of knowledges, and it eats the souls of those who experience it.[23]

From this ground-breaking work we can abstract a 'secrets and lies' analysis that is extremely revealing as far as over the

top reactions are concerned. Basically what is being argued here is that power is always flawed; it is never complete. But to sustain power, power likes to naturalise itself as complete, pervasive, systematic, wholistic and so on—the grand narrative, the totalising system and all that goes with it. To do this, power has to lie—to cover up its secrets. And the bigger the secret, the bigger the lie.

In Australia, for example, two of the biggest lies have to do with Indigenous peoples. One is terra nullius, the idea that when the Europeans arrived there was no one here; the secret of course is Indigenous peoples. Another scorching lie has to do with the stolen generations—the idea that they were removed from their families for their own good; the secret here of course is extermination (I won't use the term genocide since that would imply that Indigenous people were treated like people, which they clearly were not).

- **terra nullius**

[secret ... Aboriginal people]

- **stolen generations were removed for their own good**

[secret: ... extermination]

I've found it very productive to apply this analysis to various dimensions of controversy around the work of the 'Sydney School'. The analysis reveals how buttons were pushed, when we weren't really aware we were pushing them. We exposed secrets, giving the lie to what people in powerful positions were doing. This subverts power and leads to highly charged outbursts by people threatened with something to lose. Jay Lemke[24] refers to these secret/lie antipathies as disjunctions and has written insightfully about the strength and fragility of power's investiture in them. Here's a few more secrets and lies which we found exploding around us over the years:

- **progressive education is good for children**

[secret: ...was good for new middle class primary school children]

- **universities are for producing knowledge**

[secret: …reproducing knowledge]

- **tenure protects us from politicians**

[secret: …from each other]

- **formal linguistics is about language**

[secret: …about linguistics]

- **sociolinguistics is about social variation**

[secret: …about formal variation]

- **descriptive linguistics saves endangered languages**

[secret: ...archives dying languages]

- **traditional grammar promotes literacy**

[secret: …promotes discrimination]

If you're involved in any of these secrets you'll recognise immediately what I mean by pushing buttons. In my own department, functional linguists' success in dealing with the language people really use and the range of applications deriving from these understandings gave the lie to both descriptive linguistics and sociolinguistics—so much so that when Halliday retired an extremely emotional struggle took place as a result of which the Faculty decided to put an end to the Department's functionalist orientation, and return linguistics to the sanctity of the disjunctions of mainstream American paradigms. One of the rallying cries during these debates was that the Department had been taken over by teachers! 'We had to get back to doing linguistics', it was claimed. Now in fact, if anyone was guilty of bringing too many educators into the Department it was me, and looking over my records only two (out of ten) of my graduate students at the time were working in educational linguistics; and of the research group I led developing grammar and genre research, only Joan Rothery and I were working in education, and neither of us worked exclusively there. What my colleagues were reacting to was the exposure generated by the success and enthusiasm of our work in education at the time; for them the

sky was falling. The Faculty bought the 'Chicken Little' argument and the 'University of Sydney School' was routed—with almost all of my colleagues landing safely on their feet elsewhere (making us the 'Metropolitan Sydney School'). I hung on, in a sickening drama of the kind outlined by Andrew Riemer with reference to English in his confessional Sandstone Gothic.[25] An all too familiar story in Academe—and as ever, a shameful waste of resources that we can't afford to lose. Twelve years down the track, few would argue peace has ever broken out; it's just not that clime.

One lesson I think we've learned from these explosions is that we need to cover our backs wherever we are giving the lie to work our colleagues do, no matter how compatible this work might seem in theory. As a rule of thumb, the bigger the gap between some group's secret and lie, the more dangerous that group will be. I believe that currently the group with the largest gap is descriptive linguistics. This group is hegemonic in Australian linguistics, with former staff and students from the Australian National University controlling all linguistic programs in the country with the exceptions of those at Monash, Macquarie and the University of New South Wales. Their mission is to describe the undescribed 'exotic' languages of the region, including Australia, South-East Asia and the Pacific. The theory they use to do this is for the most part Bloomfieldian structuralism, with an occasional side-dressing of American formalism where aspects of the phonology, morphology and syntax of a language seem relevant to not quite current American debates. In their hearts, large numbers of these people are dedicated to the communities whose language they are working on, and more often than not these communities and languages are under threat. But as far as I am aware, descriptivists are generally unable to put their linguistics to work to save the languages they are working on, since their theory is adjudicated not with respect to the needs of these communities but with respect to power relations in linguistic theory deriving from another time (Bloomfield) or another place (Chomsky). Many

work tirelessly on behalf of their communities in roles other than their professional linguistic one, and make worthwhile contributions. But the needs of these communities don't rebound on their linguistics, because their linguistics is not put at risk in relation to these needs. It simply does not engage.

The result of this is a soul destroying gap between the secret and lie. The lie is that these linguists are saving endangered languages; the secret is that in fact they are simply archiving them, and not much of them at that—descriptions tend to be relatively strong on phonology and morphology, weaker on syntax, weaker still on discourse and context. The things that really matter for saving a language are the very last things described (if addressed at all), because American formalism doesn't focus on the discourse and context levels. It's not unheard of for these linguists to end up the last speaker of the languages they've dedicated their lives to. Make no mistake, this is a painful process. It wounds these linguists deeply. And anyone giving the lie to this kind of work is more than likely to be greeted with a paranoid response. All of the margins of my own department—functional linguistics, sociolinguistics, and most recently applied linguistics (including the very people foolish enough to have turned the department over to the ANU)—have suffered from the paranoia of this group over the past twelve years. In Cranny-Francis's terms, their secret is obvious to every one, but cannot be officially acknowledged and addressed, and so eats the souls of those in thrall.

Dialogue

As we've seen, the 'Sydney School' involved itself in some important dialogues, between functional linguistics and education, and with sociology and cultural studies as far as the politics of literacy is concerned. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) and social semiotics also had a role to play, especially as far as work on ideology, subjectivity and multi-modality were concerned.

My feeling is that the kind of dialogues in which we engaged were once again something special, that I'm not sure had taken place in language education over the years. My take on this has to do with a distinction I draw between interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work. Interdisciplinary work I characterise as involving two or more disciplines, often their centres. These tackle a problem by dividing it up and sharing it out to relevant expertise. Findings then get pooled together via some kind of shared inter-language, which might or might not be the meta-language of one of the participating disciplines. This kind of enterprise might be characterised as exploring differences. I may be wrong, but I think it reflects the relationship between Halliday's functional linguistics and Bernstein's sociology of education around language in education projects in London in the 1960s.

> **interdisciplinary** (exploring differences):
> - 2 or more disciplines (centres)
> - partition problem
> - separate to work on different bits
> - get together to share findings
>   - using a shared 'lingua franca' (metalanguage)

By transdisciplinary work I mean work involving two or more disciplines, more often than not their margins. In these projects, the research group establishes shared goals and teams up to accomplish tasks. Overlapping expertise is the key to success and at their best participants become bi- or multilingual as far as metalanguage is concerned. Where this is successful, there is an ongoing recycling of practice into theory into practice. This kind of enterprise might be characterised as negotiating futures, and reflects the relationship between functional linguistics and education practised by the 'Sydney School'. This involved educators learning about linguistics, and linguists learning about education; the more fluent the teacher/linguists we produced, the more productive our interventions.

transdisciplinary (negotiating futures):

- 2 or more disciplines (margins)
- establish shared goals
- team up to accomplish tasks
- ongoing recycling of practice into theory into practice into ...

  - featuring bi/multilingualism (co-articulation)

As far as the dialogue between Bernstein and Halliday is concerned I think this evolved as a genuine transdisciplinary enterprise in the 1980s in Sydney, both at Macquarie University through Hasan's work on semantic variation[26] and at Sydney University through educational linguistic work on class struggle, pedagogy and curriculum.[27] As far as the Sydney School was concerned, covering the same ground from different points of view was critical. For linguists like myself, this meant interpreting pedagogy linguistically as language development and curriculum as grammar and genre; for their part, our colleagues from education learned to read language development as pedagogy and grammar and genre as a tool for factoring out curricular goals. The stronger the intrusion into one another's fields, the more we learned from one another. By covering the same ground with a different gaze, and treading lightly on sensitive toes, we learned how to move literacy teaching along.

What I think I've learned from two generations of language in education work in London and Sydney from the 1960s to the present is that transdisciplinary initiatives can be more powerful enterprises than interdisciplinary ones. The cost of multilingualism and overlapping expertise is indeed high. It requires dedicated researchers prepared to learn a new trade. But in a post-Fordist economy this is not an unexpected price to pay; retraining is part of every worker's life now, and we can take advantage of this in transdisciplinary action research projects in and around Academe.

One final but absolutely critical point I'd like to add at this stage is that of accountability. In our post-colonial world, we

to be the people theories are trying to serve. And this gives us a stark choice as far as the development of our theories is concerned:

- will we put our theories on the line for these people and rework and replace theory until we get something that works?

or

- will we allow our theories to be adjudicated by regimes of truth deriving from another time, another place in academe?

In modernity, scholars' attitudes to these issues have been coloured by the scholarly distance argument—the idea that we need to keep a safe distance from practice in order to make sure our theories aren't too dedicated to be of general interest. And I think it may well be the case that it is simply modernist theories that are in fact quite brittle in this respect. Their grand narratives and totalising systems make them vulnerable to the messy mush of goings-on that characterise language in social life. Modernity's urge has always been to probe beneath surface flux to find the idealised minimalised essence of things, which has to be modelled as astringently and economically as possible (the simpler the better so they say). Idealised theories of this kind are fragile ones; in formal linguistics they have become so rarefied that they aren't even about anything that speakers would recognise as language any more.

But theories don't have to be like this. It's possible to design theories that engage with surface flux and thrive. In linguistics the twentieth century produced two outstanding exemplars of theories of this kind—Ken Pike's tagmemic theory, dedicated to Bible translation around the world, and Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, dedicated to a range of interventions in language development across sectors. These two theories share some common properties from which we have a great deal to learn. For one thing they're extravagant—both are models of language in relation to a unified theory of the structure of human behaviour; for another they're multiperspectival—both offer a

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variety of ways of gazing at a text from one module to another; in addition they're fractal theories—redeploying theoretical concepts across levels and modalities so that tools learned somewhere in the theory can be used again elsewhere. Beyond this both theories are 'politicised' ones—historically involving Christianity and Marxism respectively; they are materialist theories, designed to engage.

Theories like this don't have to be afraid of language; in fact the more discourse they tackle, the more they grow. Scholarly distance isn't an issue here; if you stop using theories of this kind they tend to atrophy and die. So in our post-modern world I don't think we need to be afraid of social accountability any more. We know how to make theories that thrive on application and there's no reason why we can't keep designing better and better ones. We don't have to wait to discover the whole truth before intervening, as modernity prescribes. We can dive in and struggle. That's what research has to be about if research universities are to survive.

Attrition: 'homicide—life on the streets'

Here and there above I've referred to the price of struggle. And I'd like to say some more about that here, since over the past few yeas some of our key agencies have suffered badly—some would argue in direct relation to their success implementing programs inspired by the 'Sydney School'. I'll deal with just three sites here, by no means an exhaustive account.

Case 1. As noted above, the Metropolitan East Region's Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) was critical to our work in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The program itself was a federally funded initiative of Gough Whitlam's Labor government in the 1970s. In order to get federal funding to Catholic schools serving working class and migrant communities Whitlam had to agree to support federal funding for private schools across the board, however little some needed that support. By way of compensating in part for this, the DSP was established

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with dedicated resources for needy schools. DSP regional centres developed as independent agencies as far as the development of relevant pedagogy and curriculum were concerned, and so were able to trial our ideas free from interference from the NSW Department of Education and Training (which has always been hostile to our work). Tragically, by the mid-90s, the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) gained control of DSP funding and began a systematic program of dismantling centres and disbursing funding through the system in such a way that only trickles filtered through to needy schools—too little to be used for initiatives, too little even to support existing programs—just enough perhaps for a temporary band-aid solution here and there. The point of this was to extinguish the DSP as an independent agency, and bring control of funding and programming back to DET where DET had always felt that it belonged. So where once we had two complementary voices, now we have one. One effect of this was that $2,000,000 worth of research into secondary school and workplace literacy (the Write it Right Project) was derailed and buried (theory, practice, in-service materials, classroom materials, reports and all), and the WIR Project has accordingly had a negligible impact on literacy teaching compared to what it would have had had the DSP been left alone. Let's call this 'centralisation'.

Case 2. Alongside this DSP research, my students and colleagues were heavily involved in pedagogy and curriculum development in the NSW Adult Migrant Education Service, an agency within DET. AMES ran the Adult Migrant Education Program, which is funded by the federal Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA). This program is designed to teach English intensively to migrant Australians on their arrival from overseas. The NSW AMES developed curricula for this program as part of their participation in the 'Sydney School' and were actively engaged in the production of first class materials for teachers and students and in an extensive in-service program for their staff. This curriculum was adopted as the national standard, and has recently been taken up in Canada

for a comparable service I am told. Another remarkable success story. A couple of years ago DIMA decided that it could save money by out-sourcing the AMEP. As a result the NSW AMES lost 70% of its teaching to private colleges (over 500 teachers lost their jobs, although many were picked up by the expanded private sector). The AMES inspired curriculum remains in place, but what has been lost is an agency with sufficient resources to continue developing this curriculum, prepare materials for it, and in-service it. In effect, the AMEP program has been gutted. In the short term it will be cheaper for DIMA to run, but in the medium term it can only decline. Let's call this out-sourcing.

Case 3. During the 1990s, as a result of Carolyn McLuhlich's leadership at the Australian Museum, students and colleagues became involved in another exciting series of literacy initiatives. Working in the Museum's expanding education division, the role of language in communicating information in exhibitions came under scrutiny—including its technicality, abstraction and general reader friendliness, and its interaction with images and objects on display. Internationally recognised guidelines for text panels were developed, literacy issues became a central concern for developing exhibitions, and extensive materials informed by a functional model of language were prepared for visiting school children. Another inspirational development. Over the past year, however, the Museum has had a large dose of economic rationalism and one of the main areas ear-marked as a 'non-core' activity has been the Education Division, and the people working on these literacy initiatives in particular. This in a climate where their work is acclaimed around the world and communication with the public (interpretation) is elsewhere funded as an essential and growing dimension of museum work. Let's call this down-sizing.

Centralisation. Outsourcing. Downsizing. The effects of economic rationalism in our post-Fordist economy where the things that are hardest to measure are the first to go—whatever they are actually worth. Let's call this homicide—life on the streets. Verdict—excellence greeted with destruction. A

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staggeringly destructive syndrome across sectors. Another national disgrace.

No sector is immune. It's not hard to recognise each of these motifs swinging into operation in the Faculty of Arts of this university. Centralisation—recently the Faculty has been flirting with the idea of giving Linguistics a monopoly on linguistics teaching, beginning with the teaching of functional grammar. But we need to be careful what kind of department we give a monopoly on teaching anything to. Before we do that it seems to me we need to go to that department and find out something about its margins because that's where we'll find the people with genuine interests in the needs and interests of people outside. Centres of disciplines are overwhelmingly inward looking; they don't look outside. But margins do get around—they need people to talk to after all, and their practical concerns tend to lead them astray. In the case of linguistics the Faculty needs to ask questions about the margins around descriptive linguistics—are the functional linguists happy, the sociolinguists, the applied linguists? If so, then we can be reasonably assured that we're dealing with an extroverted department that genuinely values non-mainstream work and which can therefore service the needs of the Faculty. If not, we'd better shy away, or we're going to find our students in other departments subjected to a whole lot of linguistics that isn't relevant and which they won't want to learn.

Outsourcing—recently throughout the Faculty there's been a lot of discussion around flexible learning, which includes proposals about putting courses on the net and offering programs and even degrees electronically with a minimum of face to face communication. It's thought this will save money and attract students whose life styles don't encourage on-site involvement in tertiary education. OK, fine. Sounds interesting. There's far too much hype about this new IT modality, but it does have something to offer. We need to pause however and consider how far we want this to go. If I put my functional grammar course on the net, what will happen to it? Will the University

eventually sell it to universities elsewhere that don't have courses in my area of specialisation? And once they do that, what's to stop them trading my course for something we don't have? Or simply buying in programs we don't have? Or discovering that buying these programs in is cheaper than hiring me? Then what's to stop our students enrolling as e-students in programs offered by Oxbridge and the Ivy league? Will we really need a University of Sydney at all when Australians can get a better degree elsewhere? I don't think these scenarios are too fanciful, once we take the brutal economics of out-sourcing into account. Especially in the most anti-academic country in the world, which doesn't understand the difference between knowledge and information, and doesn't appreciate the need for knowledge which is produced locally in response to local concerns—in this kind of country we've got a real crisis on our hands. We can't afford to risk out-sourcing ourselves out of existence—a not too distant gleam, it often seems, in management's eyes.

Down-sizing—another recent exercise in this University has been the response to the call for proposals for institutional strengths coming from the pro-Vice Chancellor for Research (Professor David Siddle). Along with many others, I dutifully prepared one of these, based on the language in education work of my colleagues in the 'Sydney School'. We're a thriving group unified by political commitment and a grounding theory, but on my initial guesstimates we don't yet have the pride of professors we need to make it over the line. Hope I'm wrong, but I reckon we're going to get pipped by collections of high powered academics working on an interdisciplinary not a transdisciplinary basis. And if we're not an institutional strength, then what are we? A weakness? And if we're a weakness, what happens to us when the axe falls? Do we shrink? Do we get excised? Do we get marginalised out of productive working environments—out of existence perhaps? These strengths contests are two-edged swords. Great to win, diabolical to lose. My feeling is that universities cannot afford to lose their margins. Because it is precisely in the margins that the possibilities for

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transdisciplinary work are strongest, and precisely there that universities are most likely to engage directly with the needs of the community. If we retreat to cores, we'll lose our ability to negotiate possible futures, and as anachronisms we cannot survive.

To conclude this section I'd like to caution against blaming economic rationalism or the global world order for our problems—even if I may have been guilty already myself of seeming to do just that. Economic rationalism is not itself the agent of destructive centralisation, out-sourcing and down-sizing. It's the tool. It's used by people as the reason for doing things to other people. We need to ask constantly who is using economic rationalism against us, and why. Why the DSP, why AMES, why the Education Division at Australian Museum? Why? In whose interests? Who's gaining? Who's threatened? What kinds of power were these agencies giving the lie to? And we need to focus our energies there, on those people, and make sure we stop them tearing the social fabric of this nation to pieces in ways we can't easily repair.

One last secret and lie

Time to wind down. I knew of course that delivering this lecture in Australia meant that the very first question I'd receive would have to do with my own secrets and lies. So I thought I'd better out myself and come clean on this, insofar as it is possible to deconstruct oneself (I know there are limitations). The best I could come up with was that systemic functional linguistics (SFL), the functional linguistic theory that informs the 'Sydney School', presents itself as an ideologically committed form of social action. This sounds like a secret, I know; but I think it's actually our lie (SFL is a bit sneaky in this respect). It's more or less officially acknowledged that we're some kind of neo-marxist linguistics, designed by Halliday to materialise language as base and context as social semiotic superstructure—a model that can be used to intervene in language development around the world.

The genre theory I introduced to you at the beginning of the paper has its origins after all in the language planning group of the British Communist Party in the 1950s, and is affine in critical ways to the explicitly Marxist linguistics of Bakhtin. This is not a secret, and linguists like Halliday have paid a heavy price for it early on in their career. But it is the lie. The secret, I think, is that SFL is linguistics. It's a technical theory of language and all that that entails, however backgrounded from practice this secret tends to be.

- **SFL is an ideologically committed form of social action**

[secret: …is linguistics]

As linguistics, SFL features a constant expansion of its technicality into new domains in order to intervene more effectively in social life (work on new languages, new social contexts, new modalities and so on); at the same time this work is accompanied by an ongoing deferral to the authority of its own technicality as it intervenes in language development across sectors. At worst, this might lapse into a self-validating imperial adventure, its mission to seek out and conquer new worlds, to boldly go where no ecosocial semiotician has gone before. At best, SFL can continue developing as an exciting dialectic of theory and practice, one informing the other, with practical pay-offs for the communities it is trying to serve. The key is probably reflexivity. Can we stand back far enough from what we're trying to do to minimise the gap between our secrets and lies? We'd better or we'll lose the plot.

There's probably a moral to all this. Something like 'keep talking, with the very people who give the lie to what you do'. And that's not hard to do in this fantastic country which adopted me twenty-three years ago. Irreverent Aussie souls will keep us honest—Oi! Oi! Oi! That's perhaps the one thing of which I can be very very sure.

Notes

1   There are dozens of other people I could mention, and a few of their names will come up with reference to publications; but there are simply too many of them to thank specifically here.

2   See J. R. Martin, 'Mentoring semogenesis: "genre-based" literary pedagogy', in *Pedagogy and the Shaping of Consciousness: linguistic and social processes*, ed. F. Christie, London, 1998, pp.123-55.

3   L. Ferguson, C. MacLulich, L. Ravelli, *Meanings and Message: language guidelines for museum exhibitions*, Sydney (Australian Museum), 1995.

4   B. Green and A. Lee, 'Writing Geography Lessons: literacy, identity and schooling', in A. Freedman and P. Medway, *Learning and Teaching Genre*, Portsmouth, 1994, pp.207–224.

5   For example, A. Freedman and P. Medway, *Genre and the New Rhetoric*, London, 1994; S. Hyon,, 'Genre in Three Traditions: implications for ESL', *TESOL Quarterly* 4 (1996): 693–722; A. M. Johns, ed., *Genres in the Classroom: applying theory and research to practice*, New Jersey, 2000; *The Rhetoric and Ideology of Genre: strategies for stability and change*, ed. R. L. Coe, L. Lingard, T. Teslenko, New Jersey (in press).

6   M. A. K. Halliday, *Learning How to Mean: explorations in the development of language*, London, 1975.

7   C. Painter, *Into the Mother Tongue: a case study of early language development*, London, 1984; 'The development of language as a resource for thinking: a linguistic view of learning', in *Literacy in Society*, ed. R. Hasan and G. Williams, London, 1996, 50-85; *Learning through Language in Early Childhood*, London, 1999.

8   C. Painter, 'The role of interaction in learning to speak and learning to write', in *Writing to Mean: teaching genres across the curriculum*, ed. C. Painter and J. R. Martin, Occasional Papers 9, Applied Linguistics Association of Australia, Sydney, pp.62–97.

9   For example, 'The development of language as a resource ...', and *Learning through Language in Early Childhood*.

10   F. Christie and J. R. Martin, *Genres and Institutions: social processes in the workplace and school*, London, 1997.

11   J. R. Martin, 'Modelling context: the crooked path of progress in contextual linguistics', in *Context: theory and practice*, ed. M. Ghadessy, Amsterdam, 1999, pp.25–61.

12   Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, London, 1999, pp.49–51.

13   See J. R. Martin and G. Plum, 'Construing experience: some story genres', *Journal of Narrative and Life History* (Special issue), 7.1-4 (1997): 299–308.

14   See S. Eggins and D. Slade, *Analysing Casual Conversation*, London, 1997.

15   See M. A. K. Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, London, 1994; C. M. I. M. Matthiessen, *Lexicogrammatical cartography: English Systems*, Tokyo, 1995; Halliday and Matthiessen, *Construing Experience through Meaning: a language-based approach to cognition*, London, 1999.

16   Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*.

17   Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*.

18 G. Williams, 'Children's Literature, children and children's uses of language description', in *Researching Language in Schools and Communities: functional linguistic perspectives*, ed. L. Unsworth, London, 2000.

19 B. Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control 3: towards a theory of educational transmissions*, London, 1975; *Class, Codes and Control 4: the structuring of pedagogic discourse*, London, 1990; *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity: theory, research, critique*, London and Bristol Pa., 1996.

20 Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control 3*, p.17.

21 Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control 3*, p.19.

22 *Knowledge about Language and the LINC reader*, ed. R. Carter, London, 1990.

23 A. Cranny-Francis, 'The Truth is Out There: Cultural Studies and institutional paranoia', to appear.

24 J. L. Lemke, *Textual Politics: discourse and social dynamics*, London, 1995.

25 A. P. Riemer, Sydney, 1998.

26 R. Hasan, 'Semantic variation and sociolinguistics', *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 9.2 (1990): 221–76.

27 *Pedagogy and the Shaping of Consciousness: linguistic and social processes*, ed. F. Christie, London, 1998.