



Thursday, June 26th, 10:30-11:00, room 4

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Developing an Applicable Model of Language: the approach of systemic functional linguistics

In line with the theme of the conference, this paper will examine the ways in which the theoretical model of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) interacts with notions of system, instance, and abstraction. In doing so, it will provide a framework with which to explore the ideas of practice and representation as they pertain specifically to the potential output of the Simple Living Artificial Brain (SLAB) project at the University of Nottingham.

First, it will introduce the stratificational model as typically depicted by Martin and Matthiessen (1991) via Halliday (1976), as influenced by Hjelmslev (1963/1943). This particular model holds as the primary visual depiction of language as a system of systems in the SFL tradition, and is still frequently used by scholars today in a number of different applications. This model will therefore then be explored to point out the qualities which have made it significant in the multi-faceted fields of Applied Linguistics. Such qualities are its holistic nature, enabling users to link language production, content, and context; its bi-directionality, enabling users to theorise how various strata interact in terms of realisation; and its relationship to language in use, enabling users to demonstrate how the entire model can be seen to simultaneously instantiate in terms of texts.

Next, it will reiterate the SFL call for an "Applicable Linguistics" (Mahboob and Knight 2010, following Halliday 1985). Such an approach involves the cartography of the system to have room for both application of theory to real-world language contexts, but also the feedback of those contexts back into the system: as a correlate, our understanding of language and means of describing it should be flexible enough to include *all* instances of language. Finally, it will sketch out what this applicability might mean from the perspective of language as residing in the brain itself, taking the notion of "applicability" to challenging extremes.