

Educational linguistics in the Australian context

Professor Pauline Jones

Reconceptualising the Development of Educator Expertise for a Multilingual, Intercultural Future

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AUSTRALIA

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Overview

1. A functional approach to language: meaning making and function >> operationalising systemic functional linguistics (SFL) as literacy pedagogy
2. Impacts of SFL on education curriculum, pedagogy and assessment
3. Affordances and challenges of the SFL approach

1. A functional approach to language

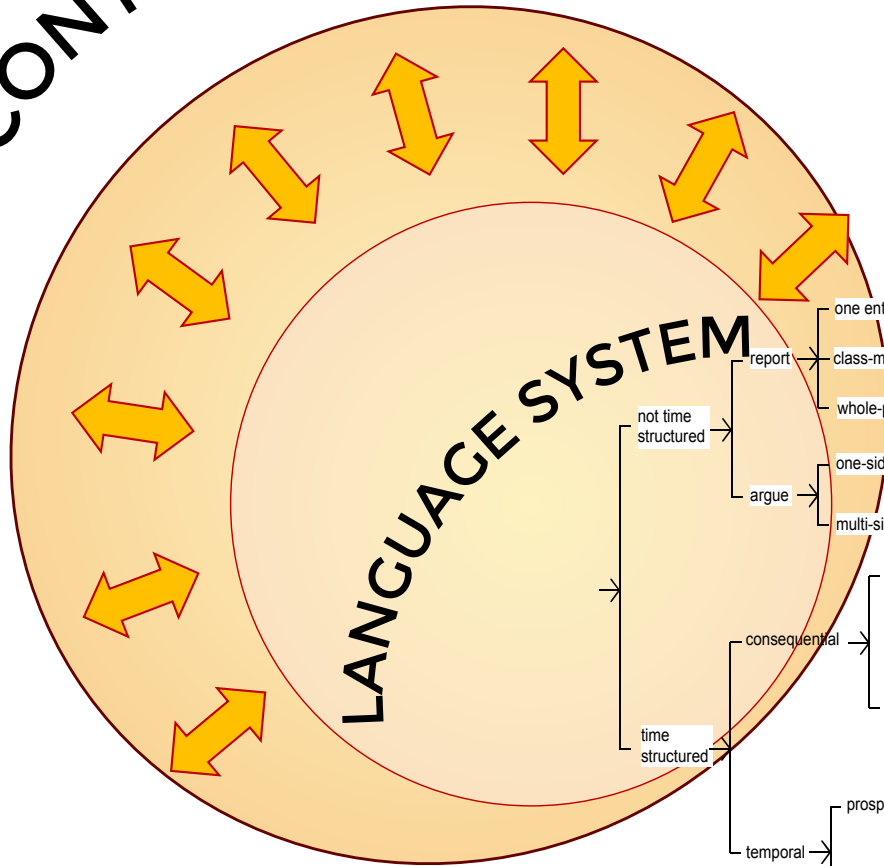
- The language system is a resource for making meaning
- Language is functional, it reflects the purposes for which humans use language

Language is as it is because of what we make it do for us. Language serves certain very concrete functions, as the child is aware early in his life: he soon internalizes the fact that language is meaningful behaviour that marks him off from, and at the same time relates him to his environment. (Halliday 1971/2002: 43)



M.A.K. Halliday

CONTEXT



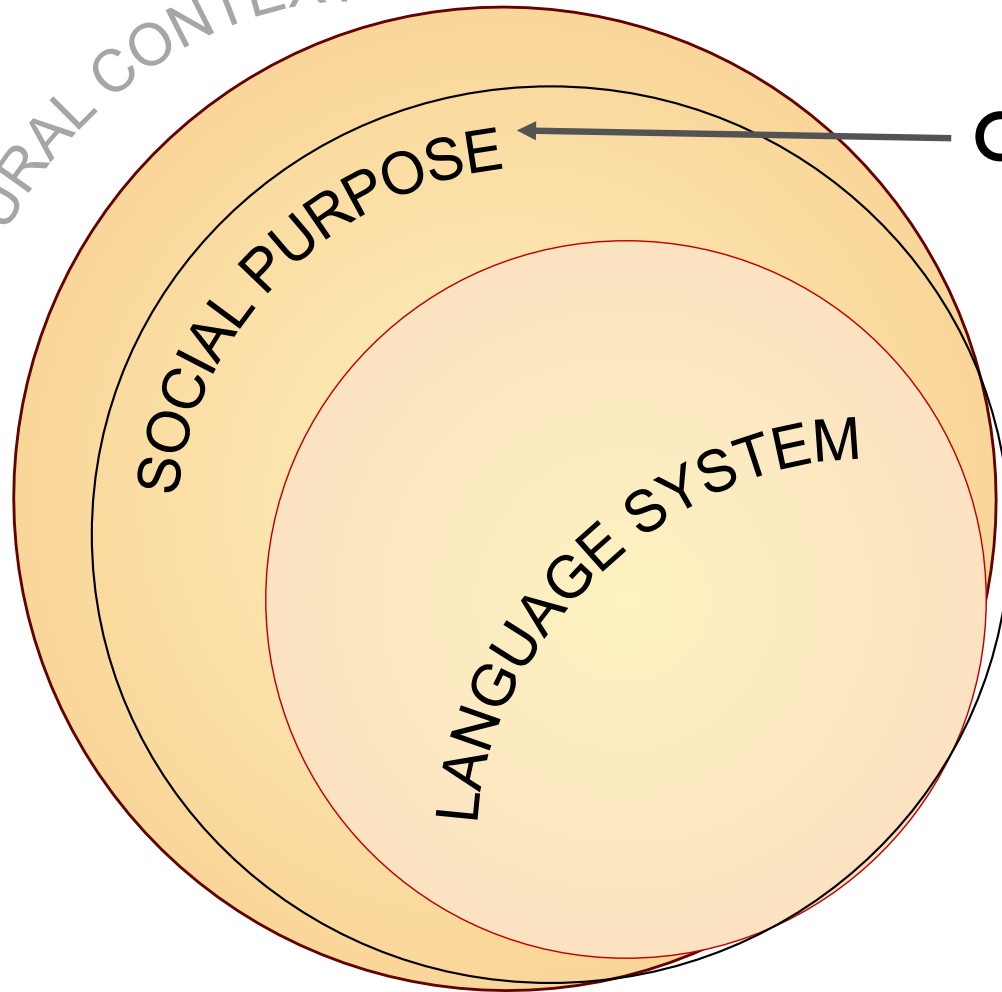
LANGUAGE SYSTEM

Constant interaction between the language system and the context.

As the context changes, our choices from the system change.

- report
 - one entity **descriptive report**
 - class-members **taxonomic report**
 - whole-parts **compositional report**
- argue
 - one-sided **exposition**
 - multi-sided **discussion**
- not time structured
 - consequential
 - simple **sequential explanation**
 - complex
 - causal
 - inputs **factorial explanation**
 - outcomes **consequential expl.**
 - conditional **conditional explanation**
- time structured
 - temporal
 - prospective **procedure**
 - retrospective
 - specific **procedural recount**

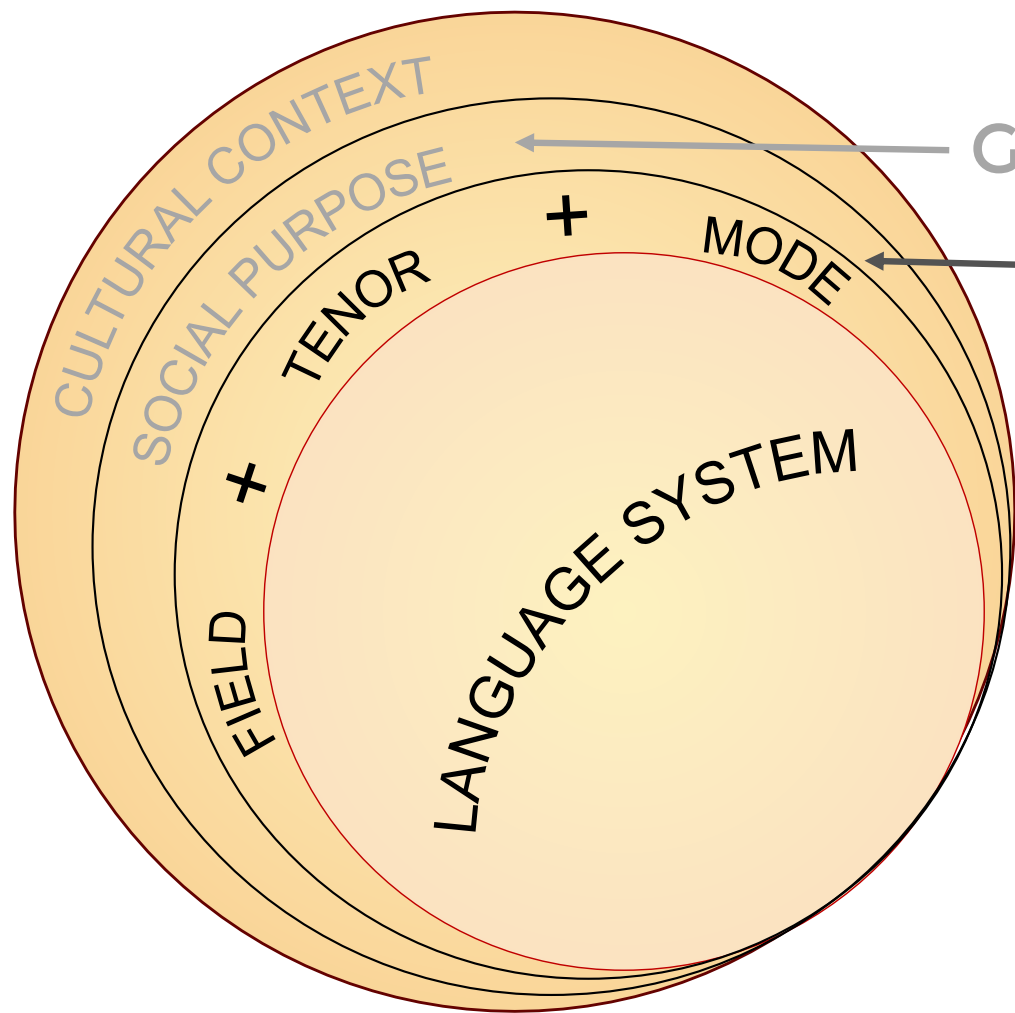
CULTURAL CONTEXT



Genre



Jim Martin



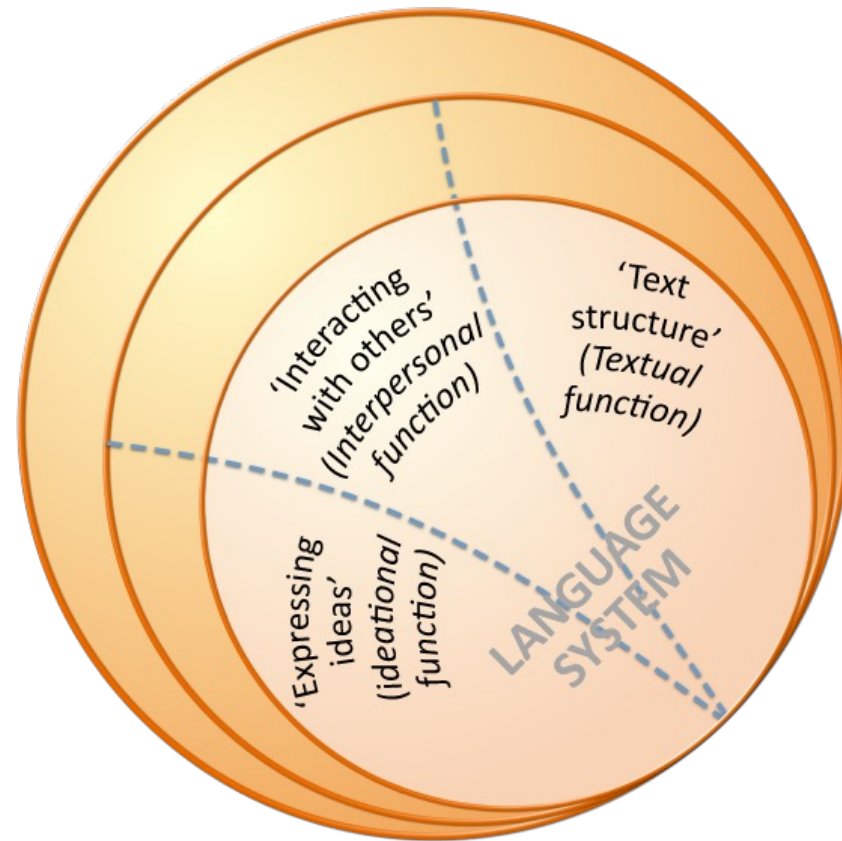
Genre

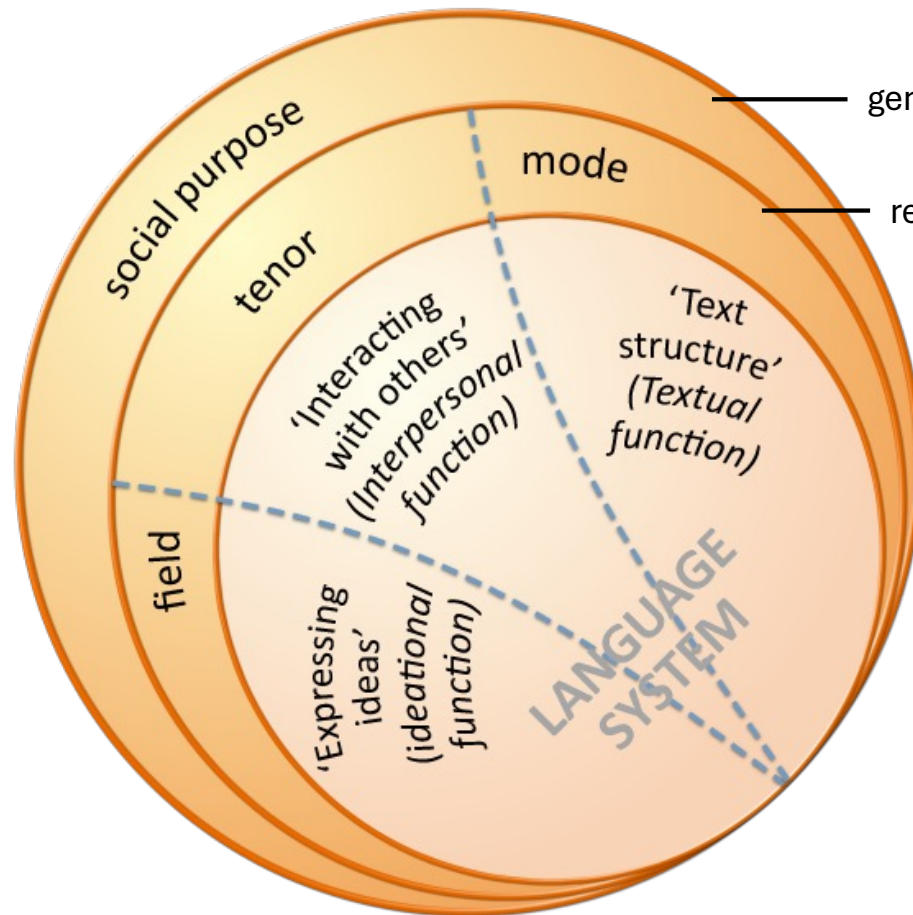
Register

(any particular combination of field, tenor and mode in a specific situation)

What functions does language serve?

- It represents experience
- It enables interaction
- It provides resources for forming text





genre

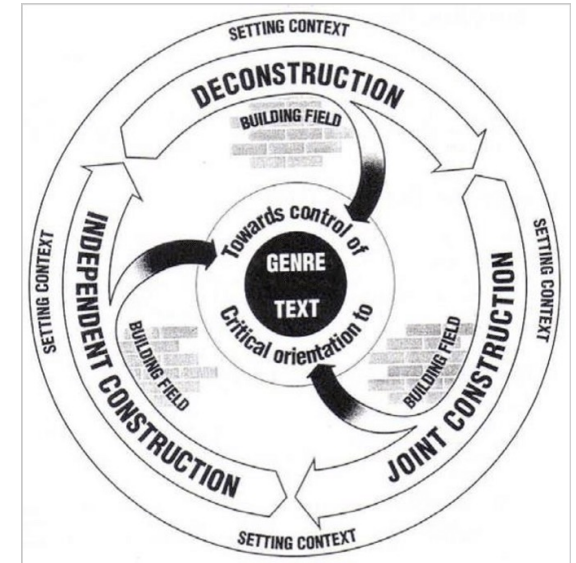
register

Context

Language

1. Operationalising SFL as pedagogy

- The social nature of learning (after Vygotsky)
Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological) ... All higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals (Vygotsky 1978 p57).
- Guided instruction or scaffolding (after Bruner)
- Guidance through interaction in the context of shared experience (Painter, 1986)
- Learning language, learning through language and learning about language (Halliday)



Joan Rothery 1995

A teaching and learning cycle

Engaging and beginning to build shared context
brainstorming, hands-on experiences (experiments, problem-solving), research tasks, field trips etc.

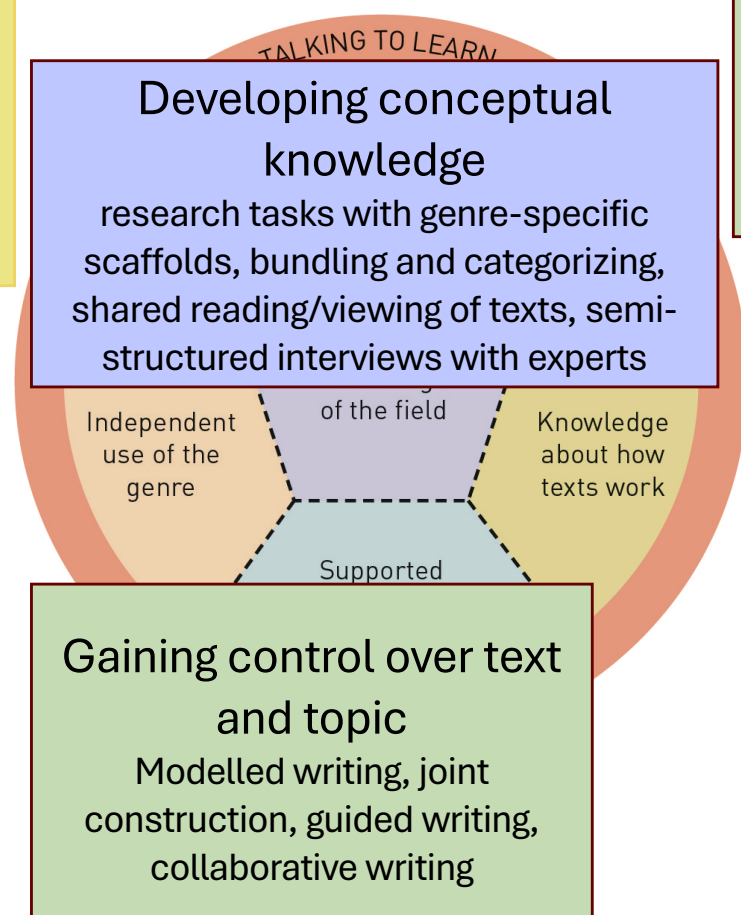
Developing the text
Drafting, editing, publishing, reflecting

Developing conceptual knowledge
research tasks with genre-specific scaffolds, bundling and categorizing, shared reading/viewing of texts, semi-structured interviews with experts

Gaining control over text and topic
Modelled writing, joint construction, guided writing, collaborative writing

Extending knowledge of the topic and text
Teacher-led reading (read-alouds, modelled reading), shared reading, guided reading, collaborative & independent reading (close reading, information transfer)

Focus on genre and language/image features with shared metalanguage
Model or mentor texts, jumbled text, cloze activities, labelling and bundling text under stages and phases



Benefits of the SFL informed teaching learning cycle

- integrates all elements of literacy: talking and listening, reading/viewing, and writing/representing
- supports students' deep learning of content, particularly subject-specific knowledge.
- works toward 'handover' with student agency and independence as goals
- features explicit teaching alongside guided practice and planned immersion
- draws on a semiotically-oriented metalanguage so that teachers and students have a shared, consistent language for talking about texts and meanings
- enables evidence of students' content and literacy learning to be assembled at different points in an instructional sequence.



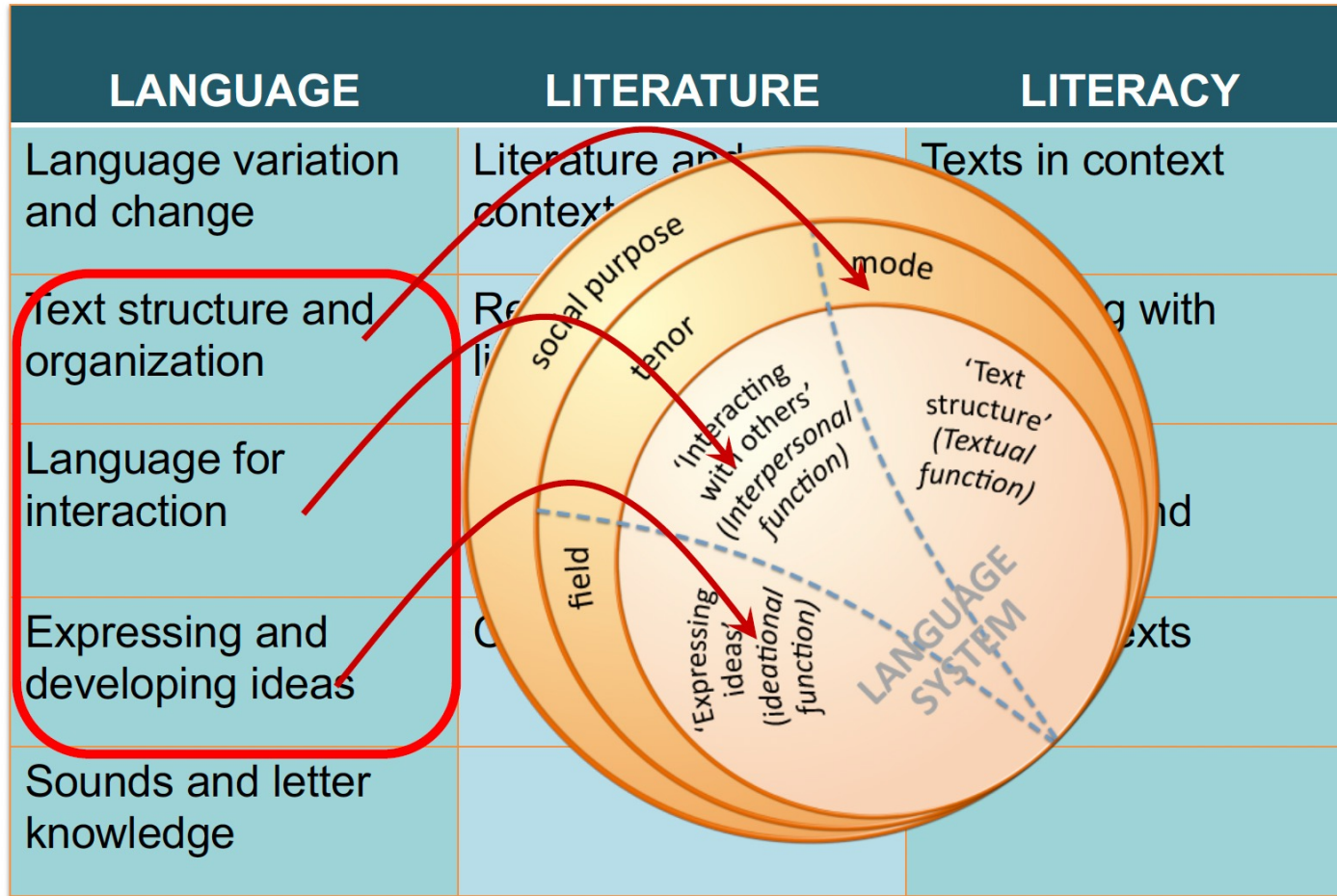
Beverly Derewianka

2. Impact of SLF on curriculum, pedagogy & assessment



Educational tasks involving language (which means most of them) range from some which are extremely practical to others which are highly theoretical research tasks; and the ideological traffic moves both ways – there is movement from the theory into the work of the educator, and also movement from educational work into the theory. That is how the theory continues to evolve. (Halliday, 2023, p.284)

ENGLISH

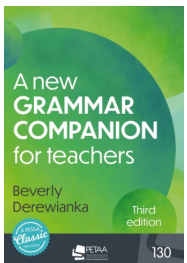
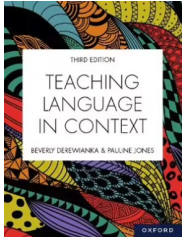


2. Impact of SLF research on curriculum, pedagogy & assessment

- Subject specific mapping of changing demands in writing development (Christie & Derewianka, 2008)
- Genre maps (Rose & Martin, 2012) - informing curriculum and practice
- Register continua (Dare & Polias, 2022) - broad brush view of curriculum demands
- Language-based assessment criteria (Rose, 2015)
- Descriptions of visual meanings (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021)
visual verbal relations (Unsworth, 2021; Painter et al., 2021)

2. Impact of SLF on curriculum & pedagogy

- Textbooks recontextualising theory (Derewianka & Jones, 2023) for initial teacher education
- Professional learning programs (Acevedo et al., 2023 (R2L); Dare & Polias, 2022; NSW Dept of Education (TELL), 2007-2024; Weekes, 2023)
- Teacher professional learning materials (Callow, 2023; Derewianka, 2022; Parkin & Harper, 2018; Humphrey & Vale, 2020; Unsworth, 2024)



3. Challenges to the SFL approach

- SFL is an 'extravagant' theory
- Teachers and teacher education are undergoing a major generational change
- Increasing commercialisation and privatisation of professional learning
- Policy makers demand particularly kinds of evidence at the moment

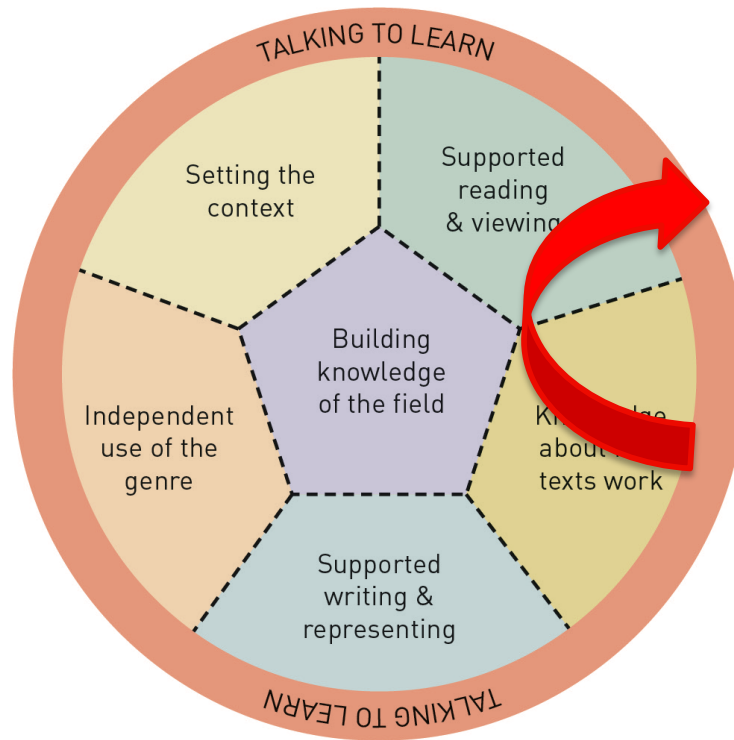
Halliday on the nature of educational evidence

... what children do linguistically under experimental conditions is very little guide to what they are doing naturally, and it is necessary to back up the vast amount of experimental . . . studies of children's language with . . . intensive observations.

(2007, p. 184)



An example of what we might lose ...



Extending knowledge of the topic and text
Teacher-led reading (read-alouds, modelled reading), shared reading, guided reading, collaborative & independent reading (close reading, information transfer)

Focus on genre and language/image features with shared metalanguage
Model or mentor texts, jumbled text, cloze activities, labelling and bundling text under stages and phases

Supported reading & metalanguage >> guided dialogue

Stage 1 – imprisonment and reaction



Trapped am I, problem
 in cage of twisty wire, cold concrete
PROWL
RAGE reaction
HOWL
 Know you not that I am tooth and claw –
 see me hunt through bracken and bush,
 see me swagger across wild lands,
 see me glory at the edge of cliff.

text augments or extends image meaning 'description'



- ❖ How has the image changed? (Think about distance and "visual contact") What is the effect of this on the viewer?
- ❖ How is colour used to communicate that the thylacine is failing and pleading?
- ❖ What do you notice about the sentence opener? Why did the writer use the word "ailing"?
- ❖ In "in cage of twisty wire, cold concrete", what is the grammatical feature that the writer has used? What is the effect? (note: we want students to talk about captivity)
- ❖ In the first stage, we had doing and saying verbs. What sort of verbs are "MOURN, Ache, YEARN"? What is their effect?
- ❖ Look at "run with me". How is that different from "see me"? What is the effect on our understanding of the thylacine?
- ❖ Are there any other language features that you notice?

Stage 2 – failing and pleading



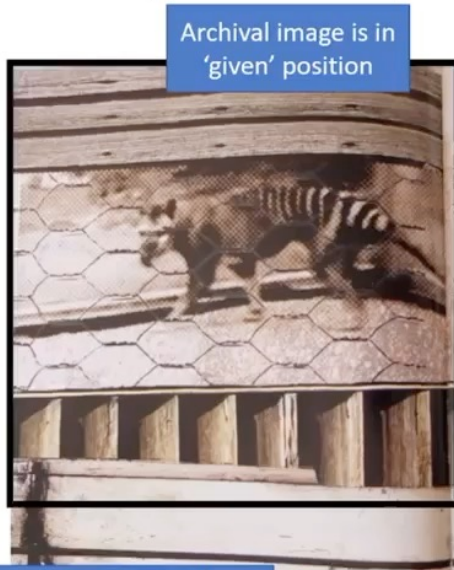
Ailing am I,
 in cage of twisty wire, cold concrete
MOURN
 Ache
YEARN
 Know you not that my heart is a forest -
 run with me through trees of striply bark,
 run with me over creeks of flickering fish,
 run with me where the snow falls slow.

- > What do you notice about colour? How has this changed? Pay attention to the saturation of the colour around the thylacine. Why is the thylacine so pale?
- > Can you identify any vectors? What is the effect of those vectors?
- > What can you say about the shot distance? How does this change from the previous image? Why?



Supported reading & metalanguage >> guided dialogue

Stage 1 – imprisonment and reaction



Archival image is in
'given' position

Sepia tones of
mediated archival
images

tight framing of
image

Trapped am I,
in cage of twisty wire, cold concrete

problem

PROWL

RAGE

HOWL

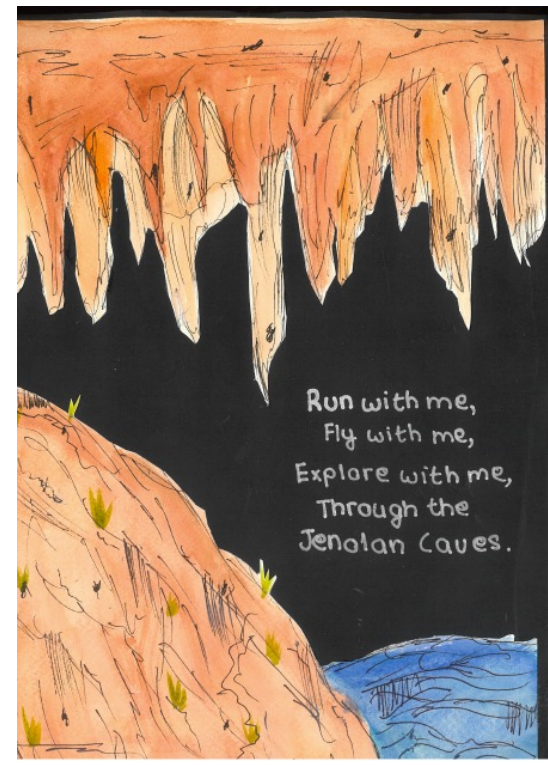
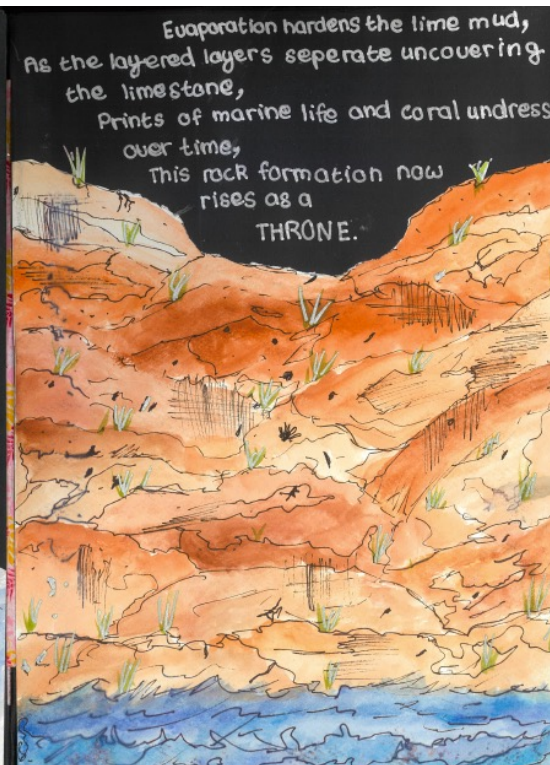
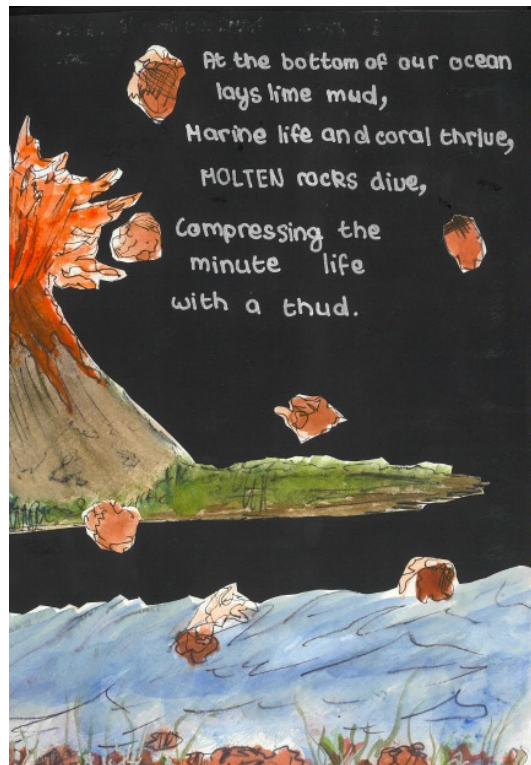
reaction

Know you not that I am tooth and claw –
see me hunt through bracken and bush,
see me swagger across wild lands,
see me glory at the edge of cliff.

*text augments or extends
image meaning*

'description'

The Journey of the Jenolan Caves





useful references



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