

Introduction

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Linguistics in a Systemic Perspective

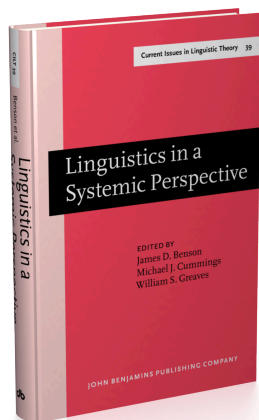
**Edited by James D. Benson, Michael J. Cummings and
William S. Greaves**

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INTRODUCTION

Linguistics in a Systemic Perspective illustrates how a diverse range of linguistic interests and concerns are handled within the approach deriving from J.R. Firth known as Systemic linguistics. The volume does not offer a review of the 'state of the art', such as that provided by C.S. Butler's *Systemic Linguistics: Theory and Application* (Batsford, 1985); rather, it shows systemicists at work. All but two of the chapters have never appeared in print. We feel that the volume will be of interest to readers with varying degrees of familiarity with the Systemic tradition.

The contents have been organized in widening circles beginning with approaches to intonation, grammar and lexis, and moving on to questions of semantics, anthropology, discourse and semiotics. This sequence is not meant to imply that the systemicists take a narrow and compartmentalized view of their research questions. In their different ways, all of the thirteen chapters treat their subjects in terms of both inter- and intra-level relations. In the very first chapter, El-Menoufy discusses the grammar of intonation in the context of discourse. Halliday calls attention to difficulties of using language as its own metalanguage. The three chapters which follow concentrate on the lexical end of the lexico-grammatical continuum. Lyne deals with the syntax-lexis interface. Sinclair looks at the correlation between the sense of words and their transitivity types. Phillips shows how textual relations of lexical macrostructure in scientific writing influence the sense of words in a dynamic way.

Butler, Davies, Fawcett and Matthiessen approach clearly delimited areas of syntax in the different contexts of pragmatics, discourse and semantics. Butler's empirical study demonstrates that 'it is possible to correlate the relative politeness and speech act classification of modalised directives with the semantics of mood and modalisation, as defined in terms of systemic choice'. In her discussion of another area of modality, Davies addresses the challenging problem of the same item in surface grammar realizing different metafunctional meanings. Fawcett shows how alternative networks for personal pronouns may be evaluated by a consideration of

whether what is being captured is at the level of form or of semantics. Matthiessen uses the mood type system to illustrate how the semantic and lexico-grammatical levels are related in a computerized text-generation system.

Martin, Gregory, Threadgold and Steiner discuss language in even wider cultural and semiotic contexts. In comparing English and Tagalog, Martin shows how Whorf's notion of the cryptotype is a live issue repaying further investigation in register specific texts. Gregory summarizes 'Communication linguistics' in an integrated model that explains how knowledge is encoded and decoded in a society. Threadgold explains how the 'meaning' of Milton's Satan was recoded by the English romantics in terms of intertextuality and heteroglossia. Steiner demonstrates how two different semiotic systems, language and music, interact to form the texture of a performed ballad.

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James Benson
Michael Cummings
Wm. Greaves