

# Oita Text Forum Workshop Round 2



**5 December, 2010**  
**Compal Hall, Oita-shi, Oita-ken, Japan**

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### Workshop Program

9:30-9:40            Opening

9:40-10:20        **Old Englishes, Modern Englishes and Investigation**  
**Howard Doyle**

The traditional orthodox linguistic view of the history of Old English in Britain perpetuates a myth of genocide against Britons and their Celtic language by Anglo-Saxon invaders who spoke more or less a common Germanic tongue which, mixed with some Viking Norse input, became Old English by the ninth century AD. This view is based heavily on literary and other written texts, their philological and syntactic analysis. This view has been seriously questioned by researchers (Tristram 2004, McWhorter 2008 2009, Vennemann 2009) who consider other, non-language evidence, question historical assumptions and reach radically different conclusions. Further, in hindsight, it appears that the circumstances and evolution of Old English (or old *Englishes*) share parallels with circumstances of how modern varieties of English are developing today.

This paper considers revised views of the history of Old English, sources of textual and non-textual evidence and speculative proof, and assesses how they stand up. Secondly, in an attempt to draw relevance to the present state of English in the world, parallel circumstances and avenues of investigation between Old Englishes and modern world Englishes are considered.

#### **References**

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10:20-10:25        Break

10:25-11:05        **Tacit Knowledge and Text Comprehension in College Students:  
Problems in Understanding the Concept of Natural Selection**  
**Raymond Langley**

Texts are rarely, if ever, interpreted without the use of knowledge beyond the text itself. As a result, a given text will be understood and interpreted differently by different readers. These interpretations may differ considerably from that of the author of the text. While no one interpretation is absolute, too great a divergence in understanding between author and reader in the case of science instruction can be problematic. Accordingly, writers of such texts should

seek to understand and respect the ways that students construct meanings when they interpret instructional texts. Writers should also take into account students' background knowledge when writing such texts.

This presentation will provide an analysis of two textual factors that contribute to the failure of the majority of college students in the United States to understand the concept of natural selection. The concept of natural selection has proven difficult to teach and understand, in spite of its essential simplicity. The majority of college students in the United States, even those majoring in the biological sciences, continue to display a misunderstanding of natural selection even after repeated instruction. This misunderstanding occurs in spite of the fact that many of texts that seek to explain natural selection are well-written, and in part because of differences in background knowledge and metaphysical assumptions between authors and readers. The first of these text-related factors is the use of discourse containing metaphors that imply agency or intent to individual biological organisms. The second is the omission of essential background knowledge. When combined with the ways in which students construct meanings from texts, and the underlying metaphysical assumptions they hold, both of these factors predispose student to construct interpretations that are Lamarkian in nature, and lead to a belief that acquired characteristics can be inherited. Differences between the ways that novices and experts interpret the same text account for how these two factors contribute to misunderstanding.

The philosophical concept of tacit knowledge and the educational concept of “knowing with” can be used as a framework for understanding how these differences in interpretation arise. They can also serve to inform the design of text-based instructional materials that help students to avoid misunderstanding. Materials so-designed will also be presented, and a study that tested their effectiveness will also be discussed.

11:05-11:30      Morning Tea

11:30-12:10      **I wish this were a dream; There is something out there**  
**Keizo Nanri**

A group of systemic functionalists argues that there are no facts (outside the linguistic semiotic system ['LS system']) against which the truthfulness of a text can be measured since 'facts' are created by language as we speak or write (Martin, 1985: 49). An argument of the same nature can be heard from a critic of systemic functional approaches to texts, van Dijk (2006), who virtually rejects the interpretation of context as material setting by noting that it is not the speaker's presence in the actual situation but his/her definition of the situation that provides a rule or reason to speak appropriately in that situation. Van Dijk in fact agrees with Martin in that 'facts' presented in the text are the reflection of not 'facts' out there but information stored within the LS system or in the memory system. However, as Halliday (1978:61-62) argues, it is equally important to view situational settings as 'determinants of the text' or entities external to the LS system. The present paper argues that the context of situation should exist both within the LS system and outside of it. I will do this by proposing a contextual model composed of an LS model and external events, with the assistance of the notion of 'affordance' proposed by Gibson (1986), the distinction of 'episodic and semantic memory' proposed by Tulving (2001), the concept of 'script' proposed by Schank (1999), and a role-centred therapy adopted by interpersonal psychotherapy (Frank & Revenson, 2010).

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12:10-2:00            Lunch

2:00-2:40            **From Lexicogrammar to Situational Context—the Theoretical Construction of Socio-Semiotic Distance**  
**Marvin Lam**

This paper aims at illustrating the enabling power of Systemic Functional Linguistics in relating linguistic features and contextual features in interpersonal communication through the theoretical construction of the concept 'socio-semiotic distance'. The study reported by this paper is an extension of the work presented in Lam (2009).

Proposed in Lam (2010), socio-semiotic distance refers to individual's degree of familiarity and his/her polarity of affect to the other resulting from their co-engagement in meaning-making processes. This concept is related to the sociological concept 'social distance' (Bogardus, 1959) in the way that these two concepts belong to the fourth order semiotic system and the third order social system respectively (Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010:152, on 'ordered typology of systems'). As a concept referring to certain aspects of interpersonal relationship, socio-semiotic distance can be "located" at the contextual stratum in the 'architecture of language' (Halliday, 2003).

One of the many challenges in the theoretical construction of the concept is to develop a methodology for its measurement. As preliminarily demonstrated in Lam (2009), Systemic Functional Linguistics provides means to relate lexicogrammatical features of texts (both spoken and written) produced in interpersonal communication and contextual features of familiarity (referred as 'extent' in Lam, 2009) and affect, thus forming the basis of a methodology to objectively measure socio-semiotic distance by analyzing the linguistic features exhibited in interpersonal communication.

This paper discusses the technical issues encountered in the development of such methodology of measuring socio-semiotic distance, reflecting how the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics enables the correlating of text (in terms of lexicogrammatical features) and context of situation. Furthermore, this paper argues that, by taking more lexicogrammatical features of interpersonal communication into account, measuring socio-semiotic distance can also be applicable on the study of interpersonal relationships vis-à-vis linguistic behaviours of the individuals involved.

## References

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2:40-2:45            Break

2:45-3:25            **Stance-taking in the Text Interpretation Process**  
**John E. Ingulsrud and Kate Allen**

Most analyses of discourse focus on the text product and a number also examine the processes of the text's production. Many analysts, however, including Norman Fairclough (2003), expressly avoid questions stemming from text reception and interpretation even though they recognize their import. These questions arise particularly in Critical Discourse Analysis where the interpretive processes are seen as divergent from normative ways of interpreting text (e.g., Widdowson, 1995). In a recent article (Ingulsrud & Allen, 2009a), we proposed a framework for text interpretation using four positions to understand the process of reading critically. In this paper, we further develop the framework by drawing on sociolinguistic notions of stance and identity. We first review the interpretive positions: the author's intent, the critical, the kerygmatic, and the selective. Next, we raise the issue that the framework does not account for readers' shifting positions and then we explain how interpretive stance-taking can address this problem. To do so, we neither employ a focal text nor specific readers. Instead, we draw on examples from *manga* and the discourse of the *otaku* world, as well as readers in previous studies (e.g., Ingulsrud & Allen 2009b). The paper is a meta-discourse analysis, bringing together studies from various disciplines with a view to developing a framework for text interpretation so as to complement work on the discourse analysis of text production and product.

### **References**

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3:25-3:45            Afternoon Tea

3:45-4:25            **Development Context System Networks**  
**Wendy L. Bowcher**

System networks are a means of representing paradigmatic organisation and are a key tool for exploring agnation (Matthiessen et al. 2010: 212). They set out potential choices in a specified environment. So far, however, we are yet to develop comprehensive system networks at the level of context. In developing such system networks there are various key questions that arise such as: ‘What are the primary system networks of choice?’, ‘How are systems related to one another?’, ‘Where and how can default choices be represented?’, and ‘How can we account for the permeability among the contextual constructs of Field, Tenor and Mode?’. Furthermore, when developing descriptions of any theoretical stratum and in validating the features of a strata, the principle espoused in Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) theory is the trinocular perspective of considering strata ‘from above’, ‘from below’, and ‘from around’ (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 31). However, as Hasan points out, with respect to the stratum of context, ‘there is no recognized stratum above the stratum of context’, and certainly none in which there is a ‘clearly articulated set of abstractions’ to which we can appeal (Hasan 1995: 267-268). Thus, in SFL theory, the ‘most theoretically developed means of arriving at specific context types’ is to consider the stratum of context ‘from below’, ‘by examining those semantic units called texts’ (Hasan 1995: 268).

Building on the existing networks (Butt 2004; Hasan 1999, 2009), and in particular those developed for Field, this paper considers four different instances of language in use. An analysis of the texts highlights their similarities and differences and illuminates features of their motivating contexts. The paper concludes with a discussion of issues concerning the incorporation of these features into the existing context system networks.

## References

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4:25-4:30            Break

4:30-5:30            **Discussion: New Directions in Text Linguistics**

5:30-5:40            Closing