

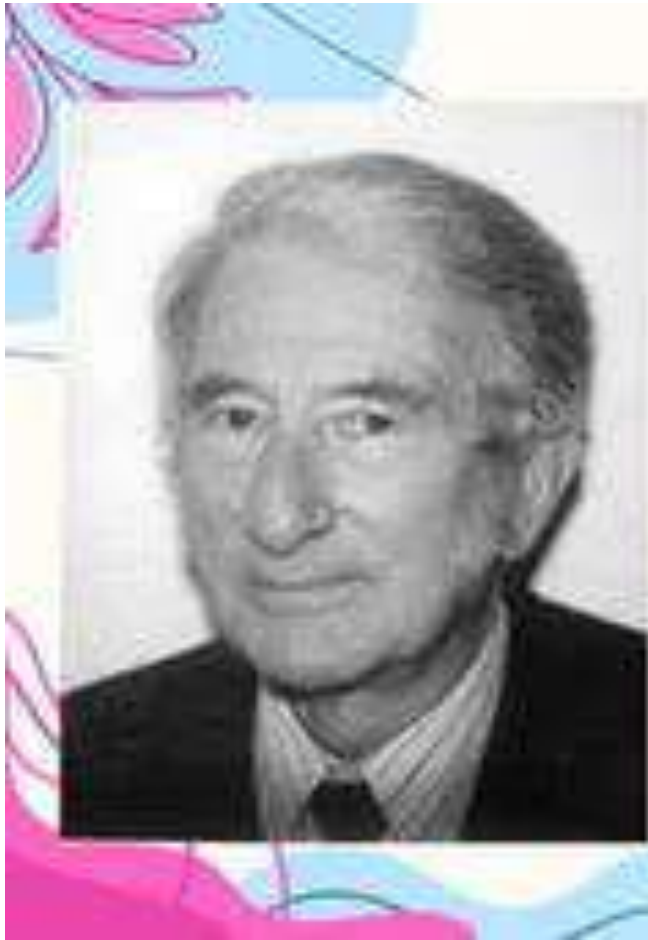
1. 3 MEANING IN TRANSLATION . P. 4-7



1.3 Meaning in Translation

Halliday (1992) states that a main feature of translation is that it is a process of **meaning-making** and that without such **creation of meaning** there is no translation. He also states that this **creation of meaning is a guided activity**. Halliday further comments that, for a language theory to be related to translation, it should be concerned with **functional semantics**.

Halliday (1992) states that a main feature of translation is that it is a process of **meaning-making**



-**Michael Halliday** was a British linguist who developed the internationally influential systemic functional linguistics model of language. His grammatical descriptions go by the name of systemic functional grammar.

- Identified seven functions of language in 1975. These functions describe how children use language, and are also known as "developmental functions" or "micro functions".

Functional semantics

Functional semantics is a subfield of linguistics that focuses on the meaning of language in relation to its function or use in communication. It emphasizes the social and contextual factors that influence how language is interpreted and understood.

1. Contextuality: The meaning of language is heavily influenced by the context in which it is used. This includes factors such as the speaker's intentions, the listener's expectations, and the social and cultural context.

2. Intertextuality: The meaning of a text is shaped by its relationship to other texts. This includes references, allusions, and other forms of intertextuality.

3. Pragmatics: Functional semantics is closely related to pragmatics, which is the study of how language is used in context. Pragmatics focuses on aspects such as speech acts, implicature, and presupposition.

Metafunction of Language

He explicates his notion of function by stating that it does not refer to the vague sense of use; rather, it refers to ‘metafunction’. Metafunction, as defined by Halliday, is ‘function as the fundamental organizing concept around which all human language has evolved’ (Halliday, 1992, p. 15).

functional semantics

He has made it clear that his notion of functional semantics does not imply discarding the formal patterns (e.g. **phonological or syntactic patterns**), but that these formal patterns should keep the semantic relations in place. He states that complete semantic equivalences between any two languages cannot be absolute. They can be contingent (طارئ، ممكن) on the contextual meaning of an item. He makes a clear deduction of the meaning of **'equivalence of meaning'** as being **'equivalence of function in context'** (Halliday, 1992, p. 16)

Target contextual equivalents

Halliday recommends that, in a translation process, target contextual equivalents should be found. A translator, then, should select from among the variants of equivalents. A translator should also identify the relevant context that conditions their choice in order to translate the given 'item' in the most relevant way.

Theory of translation equivalence

Halliday (1992) believes that linguistics cannot offer a ‘theory of translation equivalence’; rather, it can offer a ‘**theory of context**’. Such a theory of context that can be offered to a translator is driven by the functional notion of ‘**constituency**’. By the use of the term ‘constituency’ (which refers to one of Halliday’s contexts) Halliday refers to the part–whole hierarchical relationship between grammatical constituents.

Put more simply: a clause is made up of phrases, phrases are made of words, words are made up of morphemes, and so on. Following this model, a translator needs to move one or more levels up the scale. Halliday gives an example of the morpheme ‘-er’, which can be moved to a word, such as in the word ‘driver’. The ‘-er’ morpheme in ‘driver’, depending on context, means either a person who works as a driver, or someone who is currently driving.

Halliday (1992) states that any piece of discourse represents the mapping of three simultaneous structures with three different constituents of meaning (i.e. ideational, interpersonal and textual). Halliday recommends examining all these meanings, including the ‘writer’s construction of his or her own subjectivity and that of the audience, of attitude to and distance from the subject-matter and so on’ (Halliday, 1992, p. 20).

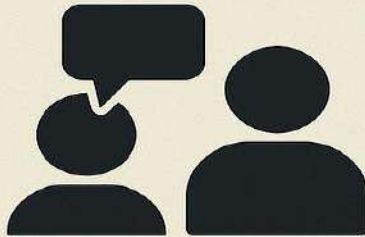
METAFUNCTIONS IN SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS

Michael Halliday

**IDEATIONAL
METAFUNCTION**



**INTERPERSONAL
METAFUNCTION**



**TEXTUAL
METAFUNCTION**



Another context mentioned by Halliday is ‘discourse (Language, context, power, ideology, discourse communities) semantics’, which, for example, includes **grammatical metaphor**. Other contexts are those of situation (Halliday, 1992, p. 21), and culture (Halliday, 1992, p. 23), as one cannot decide on the meaning of a word without considering the situation and culture as factors that contribute to meaning-making.

Grammatical metaphor is a concept in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) that refers to the **substitution of one grammatical class or structure for another** without a change in the intended meaning. The most common and important type of grammatical metaphor is the shift from a process (verb) or quality (adjective) to a thing (noun). This process is called nominalization

Grammatical Metaphor (Nominalization)

Congruent (Typical)
Expression

The acid corroded the metal quickly.

When the government decided, they informed the public.

They analyzed the data carefully.

Grammatical Metaphor
(Nominalization)

The corrosion of the metal by the acid was quick.

The government's decision was communicated to the public.

Careful analysis of the data was performed.

Explanation

The verb **corrode** (a process) is shifted to the noun **corrosion** (a thing). The meaning is the same, but the structure is more abstract and formal.

The verb **decided** is shifted to the noun **decision**. The action is packaged as an entity.

The verb **analyzed** is shifted to the noun **analysis**.

Translation: a guided creation of meaning.
Halliday

To return to the definition of translation as a ‘guided creation of meaning’, Halliday argues that such creation of meaning is constructed through the context of a situation, which results from analysis of the text. Thus, such context of situation will ‘guide’ the creation of the new translated text.

Lexical Meaning

However, there are various types of meaning, and a variety of classifications according to a number of semanticists and linguists. For example, **Cruse (1997)** identified four types of lexical meaning:

1. **propositional meaning,**
2. **expressive meaning** "Ouch!" None. It doesn't describe an event. A spontaneous **expression of sudden pain** felt by the speaker at the moment of utterance.,

3. presupposed meaning

- **presupposed meaning** **Presupposition** is information that a speaker/writer assumes to be true and takes for granted, even though it's not explicitly stated. The listener/reader must accept this background assumption for the sentence to make complete sense. **Linguistic Examples:**
 - **Example 1: Factive Verbs**
 - **Sentence:** "John regrets buying that car."
 - **Presupposed meaning:** John bought the car (this is taken as fact)
 - **What's asserted:** John feels regret about it
 - Even if you negate the sentence—"John doesn't regret buying that car"—the presupposition remains: he still bought it.

4. Evoked Meaning.

- **1. Connotative Meaning**
- Emotional or evaluative associations beyond the literal sense.
- **Example:**
- **"Home" vs. "House"**
 - Literal meaning: Both refer to a dwelling
 - Evoked meaning: "Home" evokes warmth, family, belonging, safety
 - "House" is neutral, architectural, just a structure
- **Translation challenge:**
- Arabic "منزل" (manzil) vs. "بيت" (bayt) vs. "دار" (dar)
- Each evokes different registers and emotional associations

4. Evoked Meaning.

- **Gen Z Translation Examples:**
- **Example 1: "Slay"**
- **Literal meaning:** To kill
- **Evoked meaning for Gen Z:**
- Excellence, doing something spectacularly well
- Fierce confidence (from drag/ballroom culture)
- Feminine power and self-expression
- **Translation challenge:**
- Arabic "ذبح" (dhabaha = slaughter) evokes violence, not empowerment
- No single Arabic word evokes the same cultural associations
- Possible options:
 - "أبدعت" (abda'at) = she excelled (loses fierceness)
 - Transliterated "اسلاي" (slay) loses cultural depth for non-English speakers)

The following three sentences or utterances share the **SAME** propositional meaning

Utterance / Sentence Form

1. **You paid the fine.**

2. **Did you pay the fine?**

3. **Pay the fine!**

The Shared Propositional Meaning:

[YOU PAY THE FINE]

Speaker's Attitude / Illocutionary Force

Assertion (The speaker states a fact.)

Question (The speaker asks if the fact is true.)

Command (The speaker demands the action happen.)

propositional meaning

The term ‘**propositional meaning**’ is used to describe the relation between a word and its real or imaginary meaning.

For example, socks are ‘a kind of cloth worn on feet’. This kind of meaning can be judged in terms of true or false. This meaning is referred to by other semanticists (e.g. Palmer, 1981; Hurford et al., 2014) as ‘denotational اشاري meaning’.

‘Expressive meaning’

‘Expressive meaning’ refers to the speaker’s feelings or attitudes. Thus, this meaning cannot be judged in terms of true or false. For example, ‘cruel’ and ‘unkind’ are words that denote the meaning of disapproval of someone’s attitude: of the two words, ‘cruel’ has the stronger and most negative meaning. Some words have propositional and expressive meaning (e.g. تذمر whinge); some have expressive meaning only (e.g. bloody); and others have propositional meaning only (e.g. book).

‘Presupposed Meaning’,

The third type of meaning is **‘presupposed meaning’**, whereby meaning arises from restrictions occasioned by co-occurrence. These restrictions include selectional restrictions and collocational restrictions. Selectional restrictions are always observed, with the exception of the figurative use of language. For example, the verb ‘speak’ is expected to refer to a human being, while ‘meow’ to non-human creatures.

Collocational restrictions

Collocational restrictions, on the other hand, refer to arbitrary semantic co-occurrences. For example, a law is broken in English, whereas in Arabic it is **نقض** contradicted, not broken.

The last type of meaning is the ‘evoked’ meaning, **موناليزا موسيقى مطعم عطر اخضر غراب** **بوم** which arises from differences in dialect and register. Propositional meaning is the only type of meaning to fall into the true/false category

Leech identified seven types of meaning in semantics:

conceptual: dog book happy, associative rose, home, wolf, affective, wind whisper, **collocative**, strong tea coffee wind, **connotative** skinny vs slim, reflected chronic=long lasting and thematic, war. ‘**Conceptual meaning**’ is sometimes referred to as ‘**denotative**’, ‘**designative**’, ‘**cognitive**’, or ‘**descriptive**’ meaning. It is the primary meaning of a lexeme, and is based on contractiveness **انکماش** and constituent structures. This meaning can be found in dictionaries—wherein certain lexical features are identified (constituent structures), and other lexical features are excluded (contractiveness structures)—and can be syntactically analysed.

Geoffrey Leech (1974) identified seven types of meaning in semantics in his classic work *Semantics: The Study of Meaning*.

1. Conceptual Meaning (Denotative / Cognitive Meaning):

The basic, logical, literal meaning of a word — what it *denotes* in the real world. It forms the core of meaning in communication.

Example:

- *Woman* = [+HUMAN, +ADULT, +FEMALE].
- In the sentence: “**The cat is on the mat.**”
→ The conceptual meaning involves a *cat* (an animal) and a *mat* (a flat surface), with the spatial relation

Geoffrey Leech (1974) identified seven types of meaning in semantics in his classic work *Semantics: The Study of Meaning*.

2. Connotative Meaning

The *associative* or *emotional* meaning that a word carries beyond its literal sense. It reflects what people think or feel about the word.

Example:

- *Home* denotes “a place where one lives” (conceptual), but connotes *comfort, family, warmth, safety*.
- *Snake* → connotes *danger, treachery, evil*.

3. Social Meaning

- **3. Social Meaning**
- **Definition:**
Meaning conveyed about the *social context* of the utterance — such as the relationship between speaker and listener, or the social setting.
- **Example:**
- “Would you mind closing the window, sir?” (formal, polite)
- “Shut the window!” (informal, possibly rude)
→ Both mean the same conceptually, but differ socially.

4. Affective Meaning

- **4. Affective Meaning**
- **Definition:**
Meaning that expresses the *speaker's feelings or attitudes* toward the listener or the situation.
- **Example:**
- “I’m terribly sorry to interrupt you.” (apology, politeness)
- “Stop that noise!” (anger or irritation)
→ The affective tone shows emotion and attitude.

5. Reflected Meaning

- 5. Reflected Meaning
- **Definition:**
Meaning that arises when a word has *multiple senses*, and one sense *reflects* upon or evokes another due to association.
- **Example:**
- *Intercourse* originally meant “communication,” but its modern sexual sense reflects back on the older one — so people may avoid saying it in neutral contexts.
- *Holy Ghost vs. Holy Spirit* — “ghost” now reflects eerie associations.

6. Collocative Meaning

- **6. Collocative Meaning**
- **Definition:**
Meaning derived from *the habitual co-occurrence* of a word with certain others — the words it typically “collocates” with.
- **Example:**
- *Pretty* → collocates with *girl, flower, garden*
- *Handsome* → collocates with *man, car, profit*
→ *Pretty man* sounds odd because of collocative meaning.

7. Thematic Meaning

- 7. Thematic Meaning
- Definition:
Meaning conveyed by the *way information is structured or ordered* in a sentence — what is given emphasis or focus.
- Example:
- “*John broke the window.*” (focus on John — agent)
- “*The window was broken by John.*” (focus on the window — result)
→ Different thematic meanings, though the conceptual meaning is similar.

‘Associative meaning’ refers to the individual mental understandings of the speaker. It is subdivided into six categories: connotative, collocative, social, affective, reflected and thematic.

Meaning has no precise definition

Transferring meaning from an ST to a TT is a complex process due to the complicated nature of the notion of meaning, on which there is no particular agreement. Meaning has no precise definition; Ogden and Richards (1923) listed 16 different meanings for the word 'meaning' itself.

Meaning

Meaning is an ambiguous and fuzzy concept that lacks clear-cut understanding. Such ambiguity of meaning is a characteristic of all languages (Bock, 1986). Ghazala (2008) **identifies meaning as the linguistic components: grammar, vocabulary, style and phonology.** Grammar, by turn, includes sentence, clauses, word order, tenses and such matters. Vocabulary includes the sense relations (e.g. synonymy, antonymy and so on), idioms, collocations, proverbs, metaphor, culture and such.

Style includes ambiguity, repetition, redundancy, nominalization, verbalization, fronting, formality and so forth. **Phonology** includes rhyme, rhythm, assonance, alliteration and so on. Together, these elements shape meaning. Though, in translation, grammar may not be translated in a straightforward manner, it nonetheless affects the meaning and the message conveyed (Ghazala, 2008).

Hence, as Ghazala (2008) states, only meaning—which includes grammar, style, vocabulary and phonology—is translated; there are a few exceptions, however, such as in poetry, in which prosody may be the primary aim, rather than meaning. **Meaning is regarded as the total components of words, grammar, style and sounds** (Ghazala, 2008). Ghazala mentions that it is difficult to translate meaning and form simultaneously.

Ghazala's perspective on the difficulty of preserving meaning and form simultaneously is **consistent with** Larson's (1998) perspective of translation. **Quine (1959) proposed a different notion of meaning in translation**

He introduced what he called ‘empirical meaning’. **Empirical meaning** is defined as ‘what remains when, given discourse together with all its stimulatory conditions, we peel away the verbiage حشو’ (Quine, 1959, p. 94). **As for Cruse (1997)**, each word is assumed to have canonical traits that cannot be discarded. For example, a bird has the canonical trait of flying.

Rendering Meaning

Translating such meaning from one language to another is challenging. Nugroho (1999) argues that rendering meaning is a process that involves aspects such as diction, grammatical structure, communication setting, and cultural context of the ST. He adds that meaning in an ST should be equivalent to meaning in a TT. **In short, translation is basically about translating meaning from one SL to a different TL.** This process of transferring meaning is complicated, and many problems must be faced

Leech's Types of Meaning for Specific Words

Word/Phrase	Leech's Meaning Type	Explanation from Text	Appropriate Translation (Arabic)
1. Conceptual Meaning	Girl: [+HUMAN-ADULT+FEMALE]	This is the primary, denotative, or cognitive meaning defined by "constituent structures" (features identified) and "contractiveness structures" (features excluded). These features are what you'd find in a dictionary.	فتاة / بنت

2.Collocative Meaning

Secondhand in: (a) a **second-hand car**
(b) a **second-hand smoker**

Collocative meaning is the meaning a word acquires by collocating (co-occurring) with specific other words. The word 'secondhand' has different associations depending on what it collocates with.

<p>3. Affective Meaning and/or Social Meaning</p>	<p>Mother vs. mama</p>	<p>Affective Meaning communicates the language user's emotions; mama communicates a stronger emotion or intimacy than the more formal mother. Social Meaning (a subcategory of Associative meaning) is also relevant, as 'mama' often signals a specific, informal register or a younger age.</p>	<p>(Formal) أم / (Informal/Affective) ماما</p>
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Meaning as an Important and Differently Defined Concept

Meaning is an important concept in translation studies because **translation is fundamentally defined as a process of conveying meaning;** without the creation of meaning, "**there is no translation**" (Halliday, 1992). Since translation seeks **equivalence** between a Source Text (ST) and a Target Text (TT), scholars debate what level of meaning must be equivalent.

Meaning as an Important and Differently Defined Concept; Different Definitions of Meaning and their Implications:

Scholar/Perspective	Definition of Meaning	Implication for Translation
Halliday (1992)	Equivalence of Function in Context (Metafunction)	Translation is a " guided creation of meaning " constructed through the context of a situation (ideational, interpersonal, and textual structures) . Translation must prioritize semantic relations over just formal patterns.
Widdowson (1978)	Communicative Level	Translation should operate only at the communicative level, not the word, sentence, lexical, or grammatical level . This elevates the message's function above linguistic form .
Venuti (2004) & Ahmed (2006)	Conveying meaning while retaining the same Style and Tone .	The translated text should appear to be an original text where no translator is visible (focusing on equivalence beyond the lexical level) .
Ghazala (2008)	The total linguistic components (grammar, vocabulary, style, and phonology).	Only meaning—which includes these elements—is translated. It is difficult to translate meaning and form simultaneously .
Quine (1959)	Empirical Meaning	"What remains when... we peel away the verbiage حشو." Focuses on the objective, stimulus-based conditions of discourse .

The Seven Types of Meaning Proposed by Leech

- Leech identified seven types of meaning in semantics, which inform the complex nature of the notion of meaning:

1. Conceptual Meaning (Denotative/Cognitive/Descriptive):

- The primary meaning of a word, based on contrastive and constituent structures. It is the core meaning found in dictionaries. **Example:** The conceptual meaning of **"socks"** is "a kind of cloth worn on feet."

2. Connotative Meaning:

- The **real-world meaning** associated with a specific word based on the user's subjective experience. **Example:** The word **"home"** may connote **'love,' 'wife,' or 'family'** for one user, but **'boredom' or 'monotony'** رتابة for another.

3. Social Meaning:

- Meaning that differs based on **factors like age, gender, and social status, reflecting the register and social context** of the word's use. (It is listed as a subcategory of associative meaning). **Example:** (The text does not provide a distinct example, but it notes that **connotative meaning** includes **social meaning, which differs depending on factors like age and gender**).

4. Affective Meaning:

- Meaning that communicates the **emotions or attitudes** of the language user. Intonation and voice timbre can affect this meaning. **Example:** Saying "**I am awfully sorry for doing that**" is an expression of regret or sorrow.

5. Reflected Meaning:

- Meaning that arises from the use of a word in a **specific context** where it may acquire a variety of senses. **Example:** The word "**pray**" can have various meanings (e.g., **devotional, hopeful plea**) **depending on the context.**

6. Collocative Meaning:

- The meaning a word acquires through the specific words it **collocates (co-occurs) with.** **Example:** "**Pretty**" and "**handsome**" share a similar denotative meaning (good-looking), but they are used in a collocatively different manner (e.g., *pretty girl* vs. *handsome man*).

7. Thematic Meaning:

- Meaning that depends on the **order of words** and how **they affect the theme (what is being talked about)** or **the focus of the message.** (This relates to concepts like fronting or information structure).

Cruse ([1997](#)) identified four types of lexical meaning:

1. propositional meaning

Describes the relation between a word and its real or imaginary reference. This kind of meaning can be judged in terms of **true or false**. **Example:** The propositional meaning of "**socks**" is that they are "a kind of cloth worn on feet." **Propositional meaning is the only type of meaning to fall into the true/false category.**

This meaning is referred to by other semanticists (e.g. Palmer, [1981](#); Hurford et al., [2014](#)) as ‘denotational meaning’.

Cruse (1997) identified four types of lexical meaning:

2. Expressive meaning (or Emotive Meaning)

- Refers to the **speaker's feelings or attitudes.**

This meaning **cannot be judged in terms of true or false.** Some words have **propositional and expressive meaning** (e.g., *whinge* تذمر), while others have **expressive meaning** only (e.g., *bloody*).

Example: Both "**cruel**" and "**unkind**" denote disapproval, but "**cruel**" has a stronger, more negative **expressive meaning.**

Cruse (1997) identified four types of lexical meaning:

3. presupposed meaning

Meaning that arises from **co-occurrence restrictions** (what words can appear together). These restrictions include:

A. Selectional Restrictions: Restrictions based on semantic compatibility (e.g., the verb "**speak**" is expected to refer to a human being, while "**meow**" refers to a non-human creature).

B. Collocational Restrictions: Arbitrary semantic co-occurrences specific to a language (e.g., in English, a law is '**broken**', whereas in Arabic, it is '**contradicted**,')

Cruse (1997) identified four types of lexical meaning:

4. Evoked Meaning = Social Meaning (or Contextual)

This type of meaning **signals or establishes the nature of the social relationship** between the speaker and the hearer, or the context of the utterance. It indicates things like formality, social class, regional origin (dialect), or field of discourse (jargon).

Example: The difference between using "**sir**" versus "**mate**" signals a different social relationship or level of formality. Similarly, using the verb "**purchase**" instead of "**buy**" often evokes a more formal or transactional context.

Thank you

