SFL-architecture: context, semantics, and the notion of textual instantiation
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SFL-architecture has been characterized from its early stages of theoretical development as encompassing hiearchies of levels (abstraction/ stratification), a cline along the scale of "type-token" (instantiation/ exponence), scales of "rank" at least within some levels of abstraction, analysis in terms of system and structure (paradigm/ syntagm), and within each system analysis in terms of different degrees of delicacy (specification). Against this "extravagant" architecture, some open questions will be raised to do with a) abstraction, and here in parcitular with the level of context, and b) to do with instantiation, and here in particular with the notion of different "readings" of texts.

As far as the notion of "context" is concerned, a review will be attempted of a non-SFL account of register (Biber and Conrad 2009) and then of two competing SFL-accounts: the non-stratified notions of contextual configuration-register (Halliday and Hasan 1989, Matthiessen 2015) vs. the stratified notion of Martin (Martin 1992, Tann 2017) involving genre and register as different levels. The two competing SFL-notions involve different notions of "semantics" (clause-based semantics in the sense of Halliday and Matthiessen 1999 vs. discourse semantics based on Martin 1992 or Martin and Rose 2003). They have thus far-reaching implications for the theory as a whole. Critical questions to be asked here will involve those of operationalization of categories (which different empirical claims are made?) and those of the internal consistency (how clear is the realizational relationship between the levels posited?).

As far as the cline of instantiation instantion is concerned, a discussion will be presented of the place of register/ text-type on that cline. More importantly, the notion of "reading" will be critically highlighted, alongside and in opposition to the notion of "instance". The notion of "reading" (e.g. Martin and Rose 2003, Martin 2010) is particularly attractive because it potentially allows renewed discussions of phenomena such as ambiguity, vagueness, and interpretation in studies of textuality, but also of ideology and evaluation in contexts such as critical discourse analysis or translation. At the same time, it brings with it a number of open questions of conceptualization and operationalization.

The questions to be raised have been emerging over a longer period within SFL (for me already in e.g. Steiner 1991) and need to be clarified especially for applications in register analysis (cf. Neumann 2014), text analysis and translation (cf. Steiner forthcoming).

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