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# MAKING SENSE OF FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

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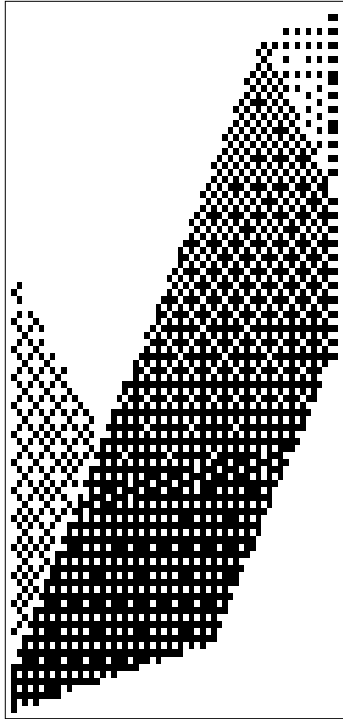
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# AN INTRODUCTORY WORKBOOK



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Making Sense of Functional Grammar

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## Preface

What made you pick up this book? Are you a teacher of English, of English to speakers of other languages, of literacy, or of languages other than English to English-speakers? Are you a tertiary student of applied linguistics? If you are any of these, this title, *Making Sense of Functional Grammar*, will help you grapple with aspects of one of the most significant current models of language description—systemic functional grammar.

Why is this important?

### Functional Grammar

Functional grammars focus on the purposes and uses of language. They derive from examination of spoken and written language and the contexts of their use. They investigate how language is used, and its effect. Their aims include:

- Revealing many of the choices language users have in interaction
- Showing how meaning is made.

Thus, good functional grammars can help language teachers be more effective teachers, since language teachers usually find they need to be discourse analysts in their own classrooms.

### Which Functional Grammar?

The single most influential exponent of systemic functional grammar is Michael Halliday, whose publications, along with those of a number of his colleagues, are important sources for this series. First published in 1985, Halliday's *Functional Grammar* has gone through numerous reprintings. The second edition, to which this Series in particular links, was published in 1994.

Hallidayan grammar asserts that the relationship between the wordings people use and their meanings is not arbitrary. Language is functional, so study of language form alone cannot fully explain systematic language use. Language use, though unique, can be explored, and linguistic elements and specific language events can be systematically examined from a functional point of view. In short, we 'make meaning' through our choice

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and use of words, and systematic study of language in use is how we make sense of our meanings.

### **Why This Series?**

Making meaning in a new context or a new language is a difficult task for language learners, who have also to make sense of it as well as in it. Language teachers, therefore, play a crucial role in assisting language learners to develop understanding of the language they are learning and to be able to use it effectively.

To manage this role, every language teacher needs a good grammar as a professional reference.

Good grammars are both comprehensive and delicate—which make them complicated for many teachers to use. It is common for busy language teachers to be put off consulting a grammar whose terminology and structure have to be mastered before finding an answer to a ‘simple’ query raised about language by a student in class. Similarly, teachers tend to avoid grammars whose explanations are more detailed than they want at the moment of consulting them.

Nevertheless, language teachers need to be knowledgeable about language and they want a grammar that reflects all the complexities and ambiguities of its use.

This title aims to make sense of Hallidayan functional grammar for language teachers who want to understand and be able to investigate language use for themselves, but who want first an introduction, or guide into a potentially valuable professional tool, such as Halliday’s *Functional Grammar*.

### **How Can This Series Be Used?**

This Series is for tertiary students and language teachers who are beginning to study and use systemic functional grammar as a research and teaching tool. The volumes in this Series can be used by teachers or students working on their own, or as supplementary textbooks for tertiary courses of study. Each volume is a workbook, comprising:

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- Summaries of important aspects of functional grammar
  - Exemplar texts illustrating key points
  - Exercises with answers and explanations.

The books are readable (in contrast to many students' and teachers' expectations of grammar books), the sample texts chosen often have a humorous touch, and the balance between text and practice is sympathetically handled for busy readers who want to apply what they are reading NOW!

### **This Volume**

*Making Sense of Functional Grammar* is the introductory volume in the Series. It answers some of the initial questions students and teachers of language have about linguistics, such as how to explain the construction of texts, and what distinguishes different kinds of texts—or genres. It addresses, reviews, explores:

- Text and clause structures
- MOOD and TRANSITIVITY
- Nominalisation and nominal groups
- The nature of spoken and written language

and finishes with:

- An examination of genre and text-types which language teachers and students can expect to have to deal with in the classroom.

The best way to see if this book will be useful to you is to read the first couple of pages of Chapter 1. You will want to read on...

### Reference

Halliday, M.A.K. 1994. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (2nd edn). London: Edward Arnold.

JILL BURTON  
Series Editor

Centre for Applied Linguistics  
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