

## Lesson 2: FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS

### 1. Introduction

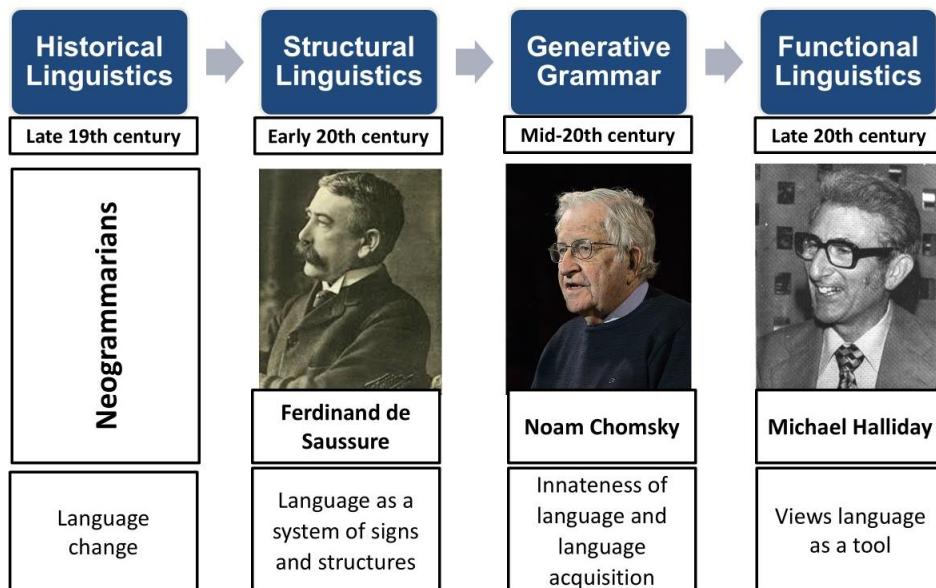
Linguistics is broadly divided into two major approaches: **formalism** and **functionalism**. These two perspectives differ in how they understand language structure and function.

### 2. Formalism vs. Functionalism

- **Formalism:** Focuses on the **structure** of language. It sees language as an abstract system of rules and principles that shape how sentences are formed.
- **Functionalism:** Focuses on the **purpose and use** of language in communication. It argues that language evolves and functions to meet human needs. Instead of studying only structure, functionalists analyze how language serves meaning-making in real-world contexts.

### 3. Functionalism in the historical timeline of modern linguistics

## The Modern Linguistics Timeline



### 4. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Developed by **Michael Halliday**, SFL is a major functionalist framework that studies language as a system that fulfills social functions. It focuses on **how language is used to make meaning in different contexts** rather than abstract rules.

## Who is Michael Halliday?

Michael Halliday (1925–2018) was a British linguist known for his influential work in systemic functional linguistics (SFL). He studied at the University of London and viewed language as a functional tool for meaning-making. In the 1960s, he introduced SFL as a response against formalist approaches to linguistics. His work significantly impacted fields such as education, discourse analysis, and language learning.



## Key Concepts in SFL

- **A. Metafunctions:** Language has three main functions:
  1. **Ideational function:** This function helps us express ideas "e.g., I love chocolate", describe experiences "e.g., I feel happy", and talk about reality "e.g., The sun is shining."—what we see, feel, or think.
  2. **Interpersonal function:** This function is about social relationships—how we talk to others, make requests, or express emotions and attitudes "e.g., I think you're right/ Pass me the salt".
  3. **Textual function:** This function helps organize our speech or writing so that it flows logically and makes sense. It refers to the different ways we structure discourse to make it coherent (e.g., "On the other hand = showing contrast", "In conclusion = to conclude", "Additionally = to add something")
- **B. Register:** Language varies based on context. Three factors shape register:
  - **Field** (what is happening): This refers to the **topic** of the conversation or writing.
  - **Tenor** (who is involved): This refers to the **relationship between speakers**—formal or informal.
  - **Mode** (how communication occurs): This refers to whether communication is **spoken, written, texted, or online**.
- **C. Systemic Choice:** Speakers choose words and structures based on meaning needs rather than fixed rules.

## 5. Applications and Examples

- **Education:** SFL helps analyze how textbooks, lectures, and essays use language to present information.

- **Discourse Analysis:** Journalists, advertisers, and politicians use language differently based on their goals.
- **Language Learning:** Helps learners understand language use in different contexts rather than just grammar rules.

## 6. Summary

Formalism and functionalism offer different views on language. **Formalists study structure**, while **functionalists study use and meaning**. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by Halliday provides a powerful framework to analyze how language works in social contexts, making it useful in various fields.

### Further Reading:

- Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*.
- Eggins, S. (2004). *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*.