

ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR DESCRIBING THE GSP OF PAGE-BASED MULTIMODAL TEXTS


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STRUCTURE OF THIS TALK

- What is GSP?
 - What can it do?
 - The 'general' concept of 'genre'
 - Views on the importance of genre in the study of multimodal discourse analysis
 - Identified Issues in relation to genre (text structure) and multimodal text
 - GSP again....
 - GSP , context of situation, system networks, and multimodal texts
 - Suggestions , Implications, Possible directions
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BACKGROUND TO GSP

A text can be characterised in terms of two types of 'unity': '**unity of structure**' and '**unity of texture**' (Hasan 1985: 52).


These two types of unity are “separate phenomena” (Hasan 1985: 72).



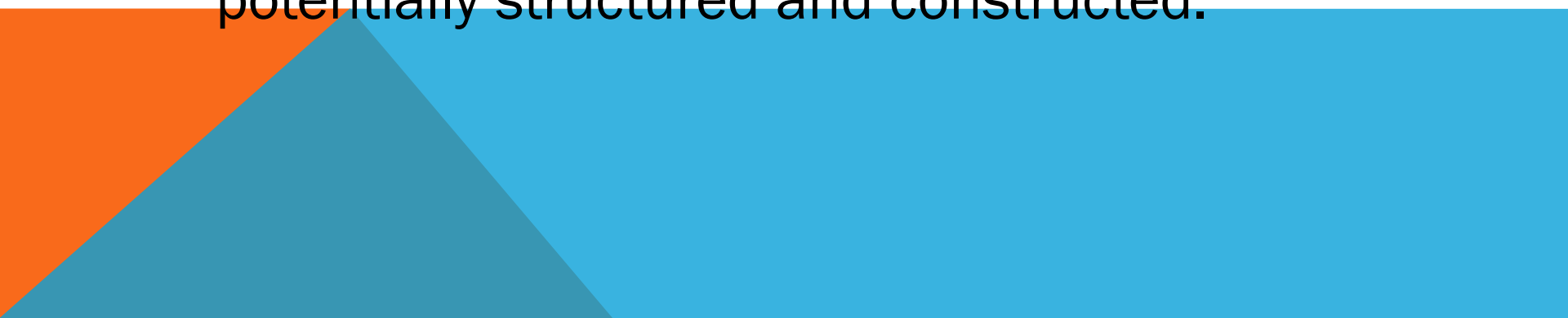
UNITY OF TEXTURE

- the way meanings “hang together” in a text
- measured according to the degree of “cohesive harmony”.
- Cohesive harmony concerns the interaction of grammatical and lexical features of a text.
- textual coherence and within-text interaction.
- “The cohesive devices create texture because they establish relations of meaning” (Hasan 1985: 96).

UNITY OF STRUCTURE (GSP)

- the ‘configuration’ of features of the context of situation that are in a realisational relation with the meanings of a text.
 - GSP concerns the meaning of the structural elements of a particular genre in relation to its contextual features.
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GENERIC STRUCTURE POTENTIAL (GSP)

- a statement of potentiality with regard to a register or discourse type.
 - a formula of those elements which are obligatory, optional, and/or iterative, and the constraints on those elements in terms of their order of occurrence and/or their variability of occurrence.
 - a statement about how a discourse type is potentially structured and constructed.
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WHAT IS GSP CAPABLE OF DOING?

1. “specify[ing] all those elements of structure whose presence is obligatory, if the text is to be regarded as a complete instance of a given genre by the members of some sub-community;
2. enumerat[ing] all those elements whose presence is optional, so that the fact of their presence or absence, while affecting the actual structural shape of a particular text, does not affect that text’s generic status;
3. specify[ing] the obligatory and optional ordering of the elements vis-à-vis each other, including the possibility of iteration”.

(Hasan 1996:53)

WHAT DOES A GSP STATEMENT LOOK LIKE?

$[(\langle \text{Placement} \rangle^{\wedge}) \text{Initiating Event}^{\wedge}] \text{Sequent Event}^{\wedge} \text{Final Event} [^{\wedge}(\text{Finale})^*(\text{Moral}))]$

The GSP of the nursery tale (Hasan 1996: 54)


- optional elements are framed by round brackets e.g. (Placement)
- Non-specially marked elements are obligatory e.g. 'Initiating Event'
- square brackets indicate co-occurrence e.g. [Placement ^ Initiating Event]
- angled brackets around <Placement> suggest that it is likely to be included or interspersed in the Initiating Event.
- A caret sign ^ indicates order of elements 'is followed by'
- an asterisk * marks reversibility, here between Finale and Moral. That is, whereas the order between Finale and Moral is reversible, the order between other elements is fixed

OUR INTEREST

The connection between GSP and context of situation – particularly the more recent developments in the description of the parameters Field, Tenor, and Mode in terms of system networks.



The GSP and the specific contextual configuration (CC) relevant to a register are intimately connected. That is, the CC “can be used for making certain kinds of predictions about text structure” (Hasan 1985: 56). These are:

- “1. **What** elements **must** occur;
 2. **What** elements **can** occur;
 3. **Where must** they occur;
 4. **Where can** they occur;
 5. **How often** can they occur”. (Hasan 1985: 56).
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Thus, contextual choices play a key role in motivating what elements are optional and/or obligatory, what their order is and why, and whether certain elements are iterative or not.



WHY CONSIDER APPLYING THIS CONCEPT TO MULTIMODAL TEXTS?

Multimodal texts can be grouped according to text types or registers, such that certain texts categorized as an instantiation of a specific multimodal register bear similarities with other texts belonging to that register.



If GSP is a statement about the structure of a text-type, can this be adapted to making statements about the structure of multimodal text-types, and hence to comparing and contrasting the identifying features of one multimodal register with another?



THE IMPORTANCE OF GENRE

“It is not possible to imagine communication which does not encompass the meanings realised in genre. That is, no message or text is conceivable which does not respond to such social facts. Hence all representation and communication must be generically shaped; it must carry these social meanings...Does the category of genre remain important, useful, necessary; does it become more or less important in the era of multimodal communication? The answer is that the category of genre is essential in all attempts to understand text, whatever its modal constitution. The point is to develop a theory and terms adequate to that.” (Kress 2003: 107)

Genre statements based on empirical and rigorous analytical work “allow predictions to be made”, promote replicable analysis and descriptions, and “reveal more genres than superficially available by inspection or folk-labelling within a given discourse community” (Bateman 2008: 196).



Hasan emphasizes “the *motivation* for distinguishing particular elements from others”, thus highlighting the evidential requirement for claiming the identity of the different stages in a genre (Bateman 2008: 187).



As for multimodal texts, Bateman argues:

“we ... need to be able to find concretely identifiable empirical evidence to motivate particular structures and interpretations rather than others. Only then do we have a foundation sufficiently firm for further theory building” (**Bateman** 2008: 187).



LINEARITY, AFFORDANCE, AND THE GENRE OF MULTIMODAL TEXTS

Linear realizations of genres are not
suitable for accounting for multimodal
texts



OBLIGATORY AND OPTIONAL ELEMENTS OF MULTIMODAL GENRES

When it comes to the GSP analysis of multimodal texts, accounting for which structural properties are obligatory or which are optional is a relatively straightforward endeavour. However, the concept of ‘order’ is more problematic, and constraints on that order perhaps even more so.




BECAUSE...



KRESS (2003) & A THEORY OF “TEXT”

“meanings, in the broad sense, can be realised in any mode, but that when they are, they are realised in mode-specific articulations. This means that we need to attend to that which is mode-specific and to that which is not. ... we need to understand that meaning is articulated in this way in a specific mode, and in this other way in another mode” (Kress 2003: 107).



“The world represented in image is ... (re)cast in an actual or quasi-spatial manner ... Whatever relations are to be represented about the world have inevitably to be presented as spatial relations between the depicted elements of an image. Human engagement with the world through image cannot escape that logic; it orders and shapes how we represent the world, which in turn shapes how we see and interact with the world. The genre of the *display* is the culturally most potent formal expression of this. ‘The world narrated’ is a different world to ‘the world depicted and displayed’”

Kress 2003: 2

SOME APPROACHES TO DEALING WITH THE ISSUE OF MULTIMODALITY IN RELATION TO DEVELOPING A CONCEPT OF MULTIMODAL GENRE



Multimodal genre stages may be “created by differential salience, by the degree to which particular textual elements attract reader’s or viewer’s attention over and above other elements” (van Leeuwen 2005: 82).



The concept of salience, which is one of the parameters for examining multimodal compositional meanings, is considered to be useful for determining reading paths.

“in many pages composition does set up particular hierarchies of the movement of the hypothetical reader within and across their different elements of the text. Such reading paths begin with the most salient element, from there move on to the next most salient element, and so on. Their trajectories are not necessarily similar to that of the printed page, left-right and top-bottom...” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 204-205)

Research by Holsanova et al (2006) which compares a semiotic analysis of a newspaper with the results from eye-tracking individuals reading those same newspapers suggests that the design of a multimodal page, which reflects **the creator's view of what is salient and likely to attract most attention by the reader**, **may differ from what a reader appears to notice or may view as worthy of spending time on**. Nevertheless, typical patterns of 'image viewing' do seem to emerge.

cf also work by Kaltenbacher & Kaltenbacher


But are reading paths relevant for developing 'genre' statements? What part may they play?

Baldry and Thibault (2005:18)


“The organizational principles of the whole—e.g. the page as a visual unit—cannot be understood in terms of the different resources used, taken separately. The resource integration principle refers to the ways in which the selections from the different *semiotic resource systems* in multimodal texts relate to, and affect each other, in many complex ways across many different levels of organization.

B & T CONT...

Multimodal texts are *composite* products of the combined effects of all the resources used to create and interpret them ... different semiotic modalities co-contextualise each other in ways that are not predictable on the basis of the different semiotic resources seen as separate modalities. The separation of different resources into different modalities is an *analytical abstraction*. Different resources are analytically, but not constitutively, separable in actual texts” (Baldry and Thibault 2005: 18).



O'Toole's (2010) framework for analysing paintings, sculpture and architecture also includes a way of accounting for the structure of such artefacts. His view is that each type of artefact is arranged according to its component shapes, objects, and forms in relation to each other and in relation to the artefact as a whole, and, in particular with regard to sculpture and architecture, in relation to the space and context in which it is located.




STÖCKL (2004)

Stöckl (2004) proposes modes and sub-modes for multimodal texts. There are core modes (such as image, language), medial variants (e.g. static), peripheral modes (e.g. size, distance, angle) and features (e.g. hue, saturation).



BATEMAN'S GEM MODEL

Bateman discusses the distinctions between rhetorical structure, document structure and layout structure. Rhetorical structure refers to the way the argument of a text is structured (Bateman 2008: 94). Layout structure is “surface-oriented” as it is “explicitly oriented towards the *visual make-up* of the page” (Bateman 2008: 122). Document structure is a concept that can be applied to the multilayering of a multimodal semiotic artifact.



For Bateman, understanding the way that a multimodal artifact is structured requires analysis at various levels, disclosing the range of elements deployed, and making statements about how these elements and layers are related. His framework for analysis includes both layout features and semantic content as well as generic, rhetorical, and 'navigational' elements (Bateman 2008). This more comprehensive way of accessing the structure of a multimodal text is closest than other approaches to arriving at an understanding of how structure and meaning are connected in multimodal texts.



Hiippala's (2013) careful analysis of a corpus of Helsinki tourist brochures shows the GeM model at work and exemplifies some of the fine details of the analysis. He also extends the model through using visualisation techniques. These helped to highlight how the genre (structure) of his data set had changed over time and “helped to identify patterns in the multimodal structure” (215).



APPLICATIONS OF GSP

Attempts to represent the GSP of a multimodal static (page-based) text in a linear fashion have failed to provide adequate problematisation of the issue of 'order' and its relationship with meaning and structure.



Cheong (2004: 164) claims that “Hasan (1996: 41-42) proposes ‘Capture^Focus^Justification’ as the generic structure for an advertisement”.

She says: ‘Hasan (1996) *establishes* ‘Capture^Focus^Justification’ as the generic structure for advertisements’ (Cheong 2004: 176 our emphasis).

However, her interpretation of Hasan as proposing that these elements are in an “is followed by” relation in multimodal texts is debateable.



Cheong's (2004) GSP of magazine advertisements

Lead ^ (Display) ^ Emblem ^
(Announcement) ^ (Enhancer) ^ (Tag) ^
(Call-and-Visit Information)



Lead: often realised through photographs salient in size, position, colour. It consists of the “Locus of Attention”, and serves as the immediate element that attracts and guides the reader into appreciating the whole advertisement (p. 165). Therefore it is ‘First’ in the GSP formula.

Emblem is the second *obligatory* element. (the visually presented logo or brand name) Emblem serves as a mark of the status and the identity of the product.



Different criteria seem to be used
to establish 'order' of elements
in the GSP formula



Bortoluzzi (2010) uses Cheong's GSP model to analyse advertisements by Total. Again she does not problematise 'order', but is critical of Cheong's analysis as being 'too clear-cut- with respect of her classification of GSP components as mainly visual or mainly verbal. She says; "prototypical print advertisements ... are inherently both [visual and verbal] and subdivisions and analysis of the different components do not entirely capture the complexity of the whole composition in context and in its interaction with the readers/users" (Bortoluzzi 2010: 162).



ISSUES

Many of the issues that we see as problematic for applying the GSP model of text structure to page-based multimodal texts, are similar to those identified in other work on the genre of multimodal texts, such as Bateman's groundbreaking work (the GeM – Genre and Multimodality model). e.g.

- The 'indefinite nature of visual/verbal elements
- The non-linear nature of mm texts
- The standardization of criteria for determining elements in the formula
- The relationship between different elements/features of the page
- The relationship between the layout of the page and the 'communicative intent' of the text itself.
- Determining the unit of analysis

SOME POSITIVE ISSUES

The importance attached to genre owes primarily to the capability of genre in “theorizing the range of possibilities open to documents”, which includes the degree to which the various resources deployed in different multimodal documents play a role in their makeup and construal of meaning (Bateman 2008: 10).



Recall that the two types of unity (unity of texture and unity of structure) are ‘separate phenomena’. And even though they are separate, they are brought together in the character of the text.

The GeM model incorporates both ideas (rhetorical structure, cohesion, etc.) into the layers of analysis and description – thus bringing them together in a statement about the structure of the text



IF WE DEAL WITH GSP SEPARATELY....

A GSP statement is primarily concerned with a potential, a repertoire of possible instances of structural shape and is a realisation of contextual features.



What features of the context are construed by the GSP?

Conversely, where do we best locate the contextual features most relevant to the GSP of a text type?

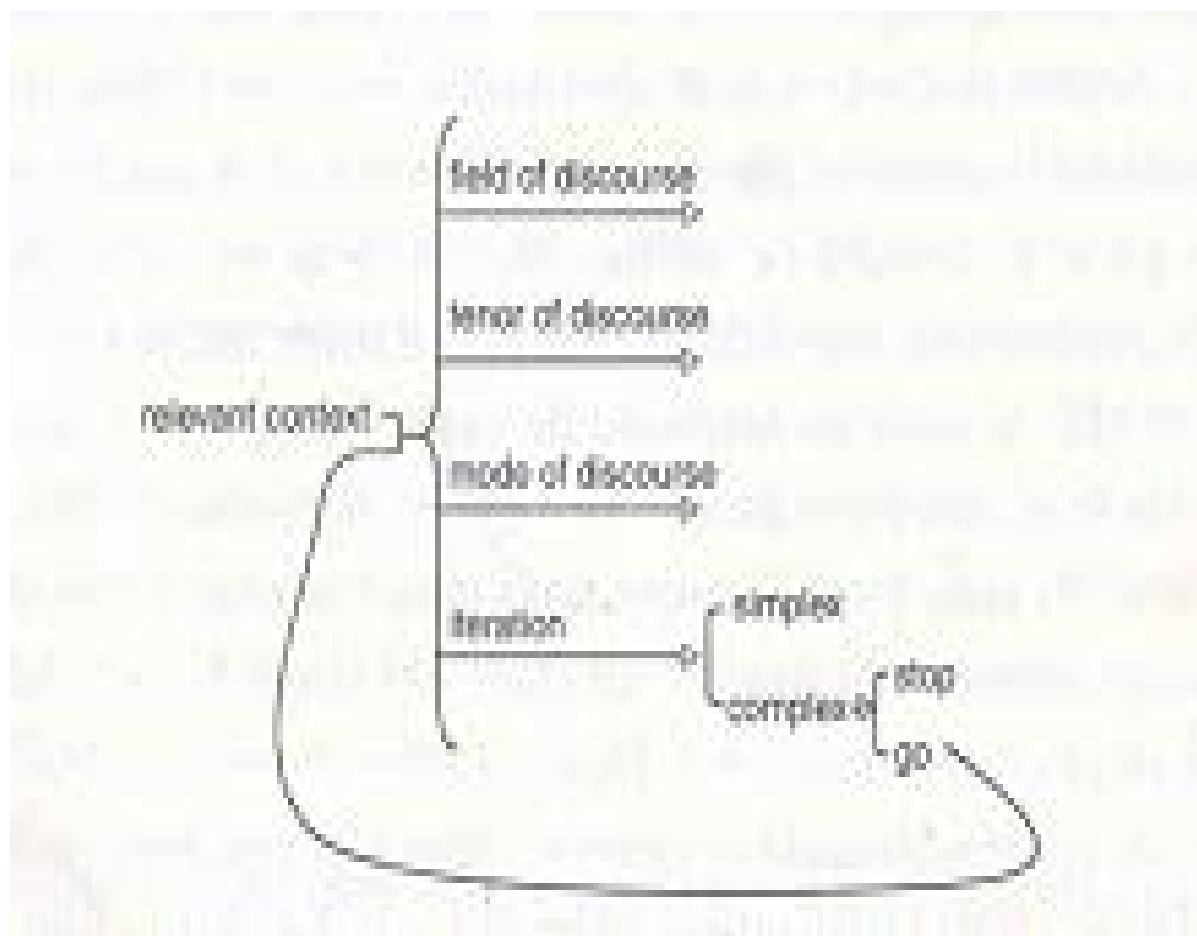


In the structural unity of the text, the CC [contextual configuration] plays a central role. If text can be described as 'language doing some job in some context', then it is reasonable to describe it as the verbal expression of a social activity; the CC is an account of the significant attributes of this social activity. So it is not surprising that the features of the CC can be used for making certain kinds of predictions about text structure (Hasan 1985: 56)



CONTEXT OF SITUATION AS A NETWORK OF CHOICES





An advantage of representing choice through the use of system networks is that “system networks enforce order: the method is designed to create explicit and non-ambiguous relations across the options... Their validation is tested by their realisational relations to language, which guards against contradictions within the description” (Hasan in press).

Another advantage of system networks is that they can highlight the constraints on choices. That is, if choice 'a' is made, then 'b' is not possible etc.


Furthermore, there is no hierarchy of choice at each 'level' of the network. That is, at the vertical dimension of system networks, the action of selection is simultaneous. The location of a network at the top, middle or the bottom of a system network is simply an artifact of the analyst's construction of the materiality of the network itself. It does not indicate any kind of priority in reality.

Can this be helpful in developing a GSP 'formula'?

Hasan suggest there are two “general kinds of meaning: those that are relevant as components of the individual messages within the genre, and those that are relevant to the structuring of the overall message form of the texts within the genre” (Hasan 1985: 103).

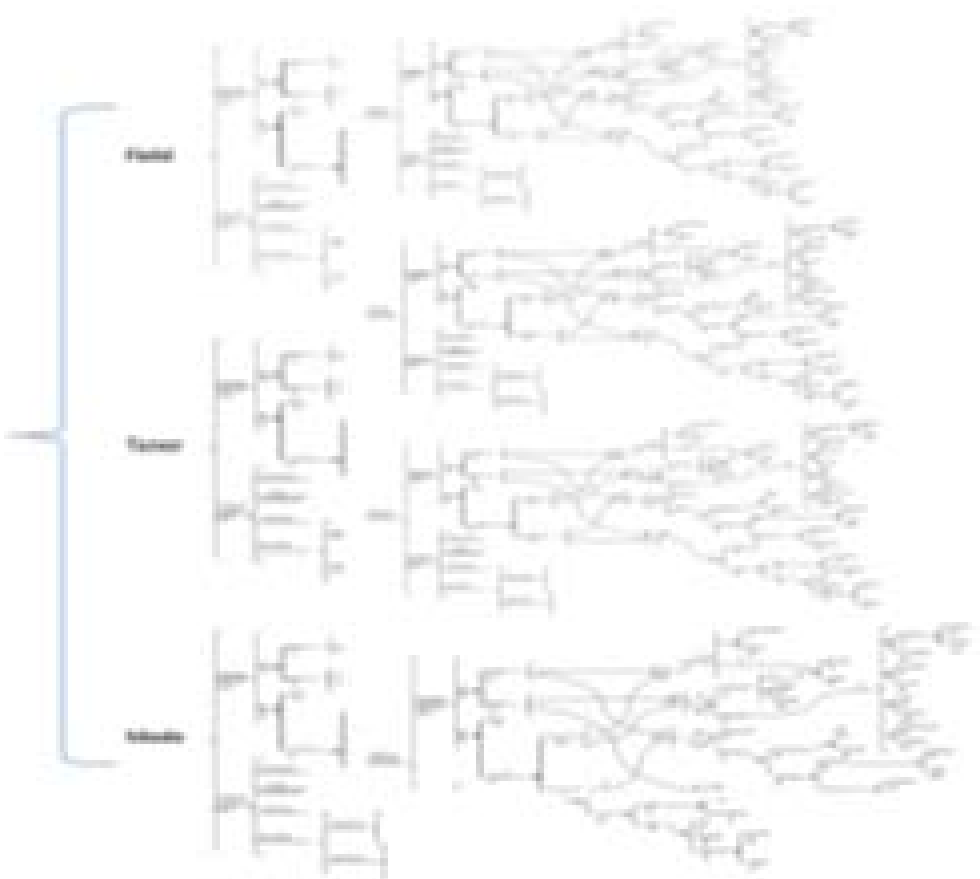


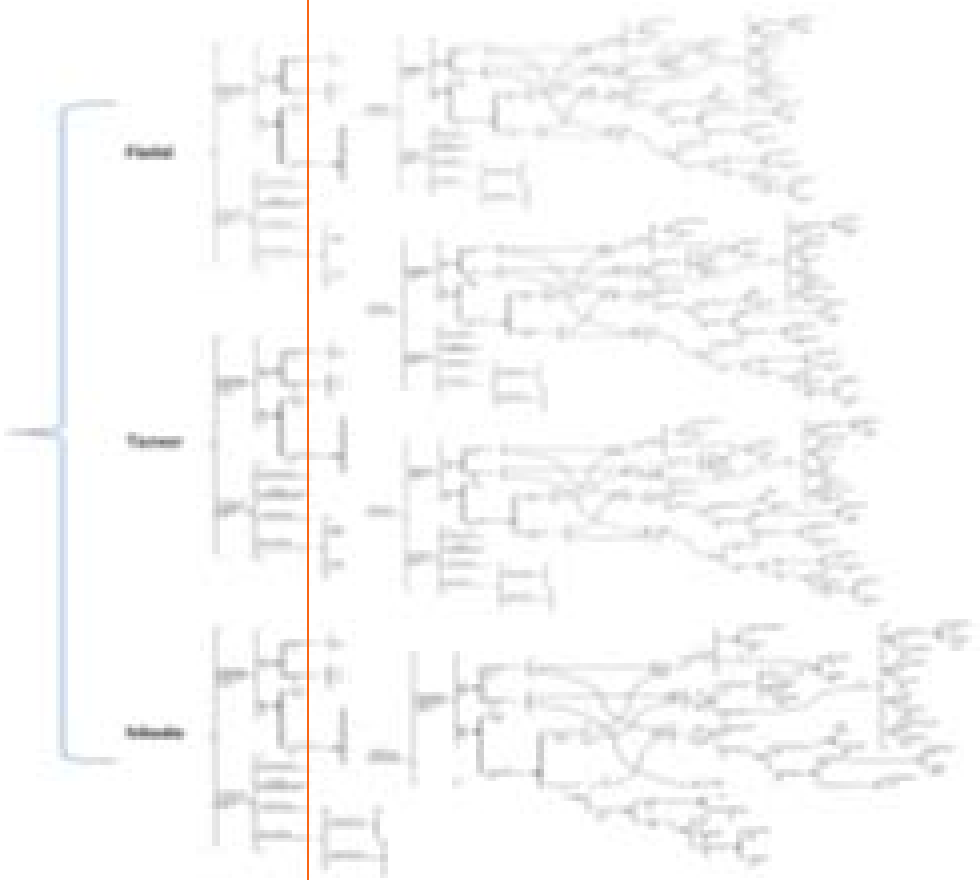
“in the definition of a CC – a situation type – it is the meanings associated with the obligatory elements of structure and their relation that really count. These represent the lowest common factor across all instances of social activities that could be regarded as belonging to the same situation type, the same CC.”
(Hasan 1985: 104)

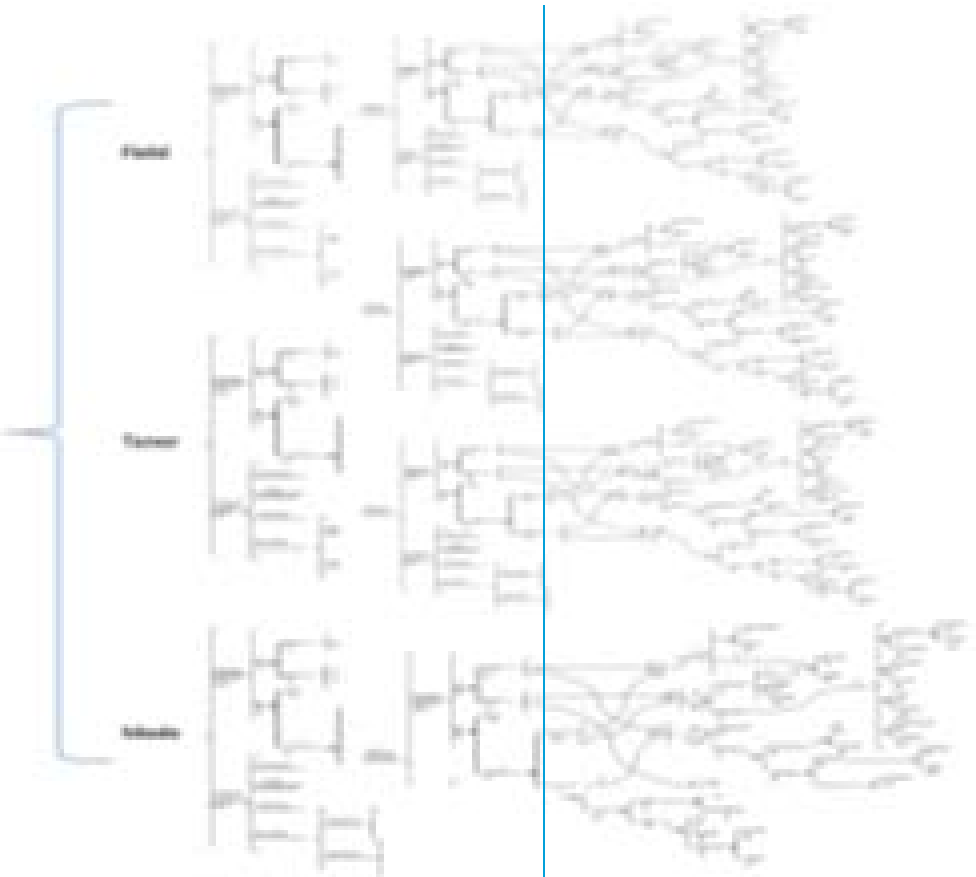


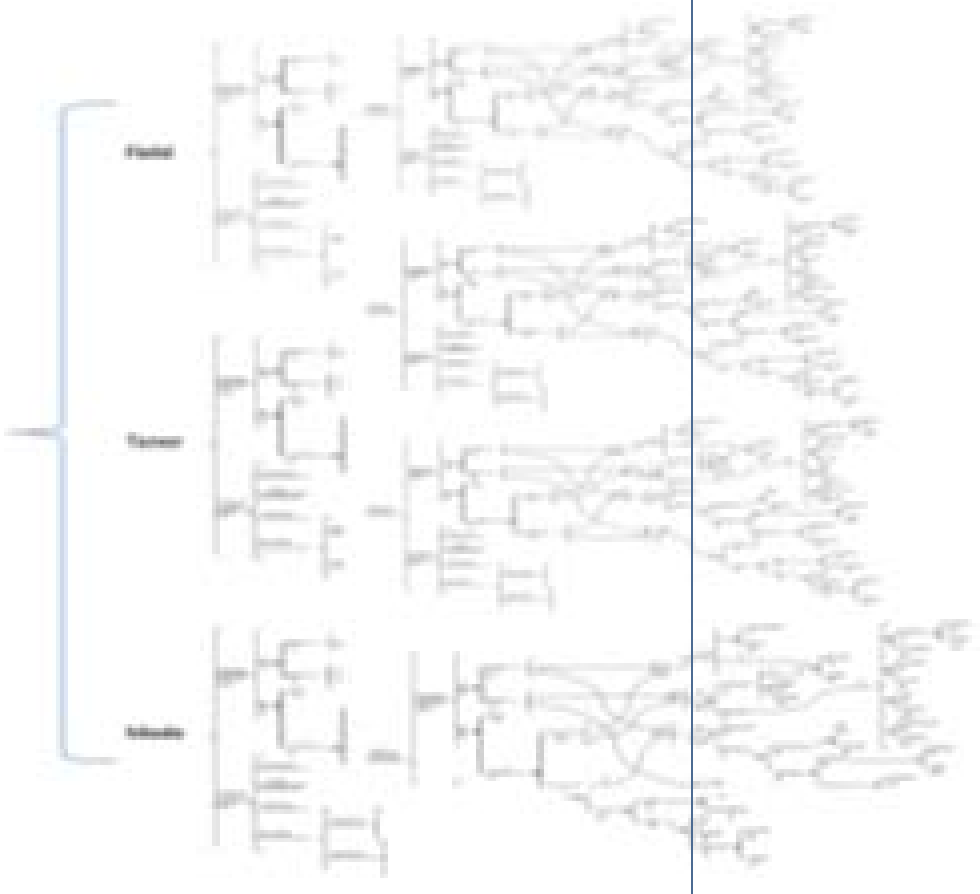
Thus, the hypothesis is that it is in the more primary choices of the networks that we would find the choices most relevant to the obligatory stages of a GSP.











RECENT COMMENTS RE. GSP AND CONTEXT & SYSTEM NETWORKS

“The GSP is clearly relevant to register classification. I would go so far as to claim that it is, in some ways, analogous to the system network ... For example, a system network treats its point of origin as its ultimate ‘descriptum’, i.e., its object of enquiry. And in the course of this enquiry, it creates a number of ‘selection expressions’, each of which represents the properties of one specific sub-category of the descriptum; these sub-categories are closely related to each other in specifiable ways. The GSP resembles the system network in these respects: it describes the structure of a specific register family. In the course of doing this, it produces a range of ‘derived structures’ each of which pertains to one and only one register variety (aka text type). It is these various text types that constitute one specific register family identified by the GSP.” (Hasan in press)

HOWEVER....

In drawing an analogy between GSP and the system network Hasan notes that although performing similar functions, the present form of GSP does not share a resemblance with that of system networks that visually show the selection expressions and selection paths. Rather, the GSP formula visibly shows:


- “1. the status of its functional elements... an element is either obligatory, i.e., defining the nature of that register family, or it is optional, i.e., elements that are subject to certain specifiable variation in the underlying CC;
2. the order in sequence of the functional elements that can relate to each other... some being fixed vis a vis others, and some free within specifiable limits;
3. the possibility of recursion/reiteration for some element.” (Hasan in press)

CORPORA FOR GSP

“The study of instantial uniqueness has, no doubt, a value. But so far as the study of register variation is concerned, this is less significant than those properties shared by a number of instances: the latter alone can lead to viable statements of correlation between texts and contexts. This was the perspective adopted in the study of correlation between textual structure and the features of the CC.

The ‘over-all structural shape’ presented in Hasan (1978) is better treated as a generalised formula. It consists of a configuration of functional elements whose mutual relations are calibrated in such a way as to allow its use to describe the structure of not only a specific text type but also a range of other *related* text types. Each member of that *range of text types* will have some structural properties in common with other members: no individual text type will have the same structural shape as any other, and none will be entirely different.” (Hasan in press)

”no GSP will accommodate twists and turns that are ‘accidental’. This is for a good reason: in general, systems are known by their regularities; they are not known by their instantial variations. The accidental textual moves are not very likely to realise any part of the CC that would be recognised as relevant to any social practice underlying a register”.
(**Hasan** in press).



SELECTION EXPRESSIONS

Using contextualisation system
networks means genre
characterisation could be done via
selection expressions.



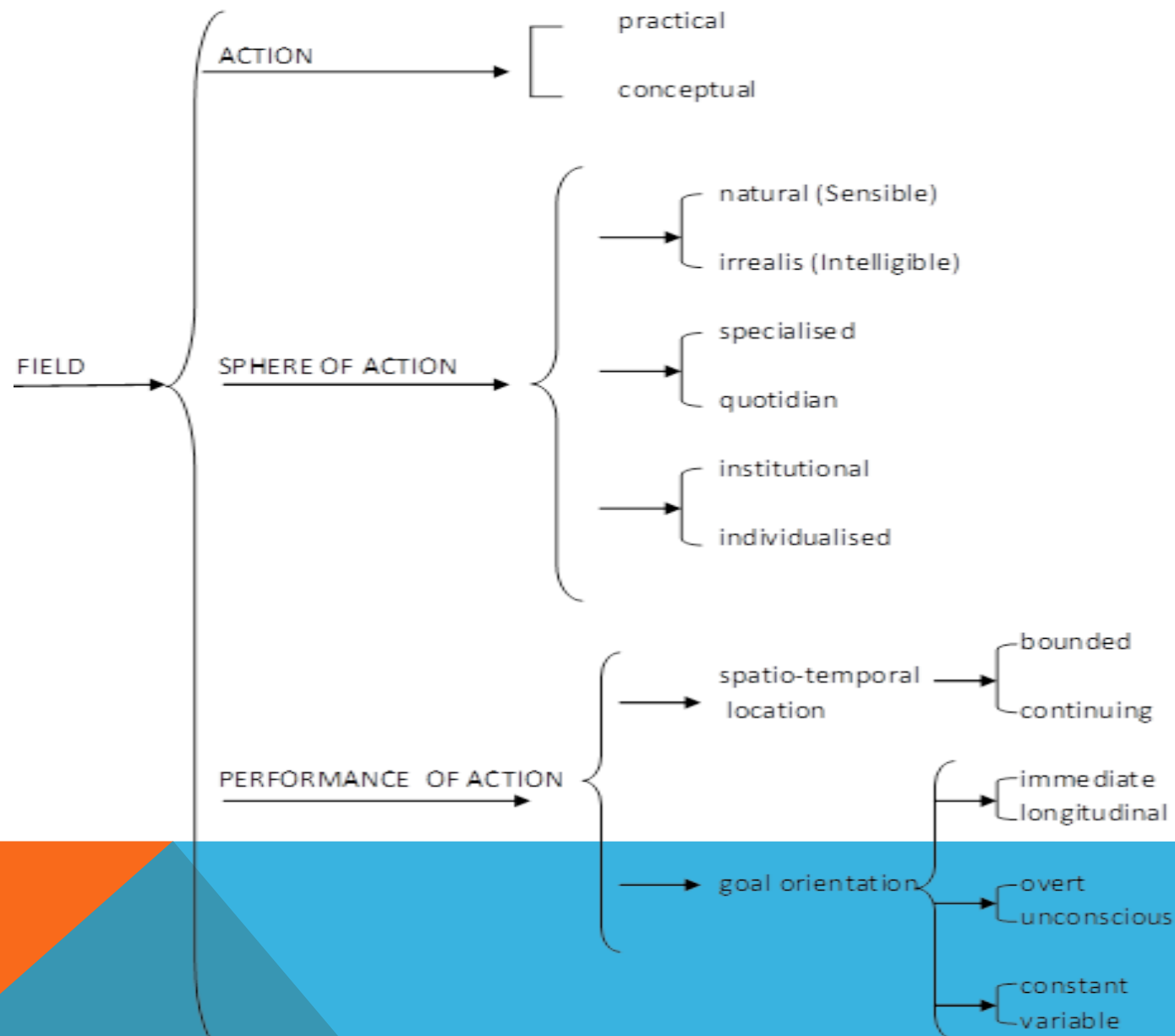
SELECTION EXPRESSIONS...

(see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9fsn6lQBV4>). A description of the sketch follows.

Scene: Policeman standing on the side of an urban road and watching traffic pass by. He suddenly begins doing strange leg movements. The policeman stops doing the strange leg movements and then looks again at the traffic passing by before looking briefly at the camera and saying: 'yeah it's um...it's mostly legwork, this job'.

From Bowcher 2014





From Bowcher (2014: 203)

Sample Selection expression

[FIELD: Action: conceptual/Sphere of Action:
natural/quotidian/individualised/Performance
of Action: spatio-temporal: bounded/goal
orientation: immediate/overt/constant]

See Bowcher (2014: 202)



A RELATED SUGGESTION....THE CONCEPTION OF 'STRUCTURE'

Rather than componential, i.e. element A 'is followed by 'element B' etc. could we consider the GSP in prosodic or periodic terms? How might this look?



A 'PERIODIC' STRUCTURE

Using selection expressions – perhaps the concentration of choices within the networks could suggest pulses of prominent meanings – these in connection with the most delicate choices that point to unity of texture could go a long way in revealing text structure in multimodal texts but our theorising is way ahead of the technology available to represent it – and ahead of the development of comprehensive contextualisation system networks.



Visualisation may help to represent
this kind of GSP. (cf. Hiippala 2013)




GENERATING GENRES

Structural potential is built from observing patterns across texts.

As Hiippala has shown in his work, a longitudinal study helps to highlight the interaction of technological change and choices made in multimodal texts (tourist brochures).

Certain genres rapidly change.

What weight should we give to the development of GSP descriptions for the purpose of ‘generating’ multimodal texts? What kinds of multimodal texts might this be most useful for?



THE ISSUE OF AESTHETICS.....

difficult to measure, quantify, etc. has a more transcendent quality..

What is its relation to structure?



Continuum of aesthetically motivated texts

Most  Least



Continuum of aesthetically motivated texts



**COMBINING APPROACHES... or at least
'ENGAGING WITH', 'DIALOGING WITH' OTHER
APPROACHES**



Thank you



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