

### **3. Ideology as concept in Halliday and Hasan linguistics**

#### **(a) Halliday on ideology**

The discussion in the previous chapter does not exhaust the list of scholars whom Halliday counts as his "ideological antecedents", but it provides us with a context for the development of Halliday's views. As I noted in chapter 1, Halliday's work has been central to the emergence of Critical Linguistics and then Critical Discourse Analysis. Wodak, in a paper titled "What is CDA about - a summary of its history, important concepts and its developments", argues that Halliday's systemic functional "grammar" has been central to the text analysis work in CDA:

Whether analysts with a critical approach prefer to focus on micro-linguistic features, macrolinguistic features, textual, discursive or contextual features, whether their angle is primarily philosophical, sociological, or historical - in most studies there is reference to Hallidayan systemic functional grammar. This indicates that an understanding of the basic claims of Halliday's grammar and his approach to linguistic analysis is essential for a proper understanding of CDA (Wodak 2001: 8).

Fairclough in particular draws on aspects of Halliday's framework (though see Chapter 7 for my claim of Fairclough's mis-readings of Halliday's work). In taking up Halliday for the purposes of CDA, there has been a tendency to focus on his work as "grammar", to critique him for a supposedly narrow focus on grammar e.g. (Fairclough 1992) and to select only those parts of his grammatical description which the analyst is comfortable to work with. To the degree that there is a coherence to the CDA enterprise, it is in its eclecticism: that is, a principle that one can use methods from anywhere, and that in this orientation lies the robustness of CDA. Part of this story of CDA is a claim that discourse analysis does not require any particular expertise: for this reason, it is common to see CDA analysis in which only some small set of features of Halliday's map of the grammar of English are recruited, and only some select set of extracts from the data under analysis are coded. My task here is to illuminate the Hallidayan paradigm more generally in terms of its relevance to understand the nature of ideology and the relations of language and ideology.

In this light, it may be important to note that Halliday has not published one single paper with "ideology" in its title. His work, however, addresses the relations of language and ideology in various papers, and, as I argued in Chapter 1, falls within the tradition of scholarship in which ideology is seen as part and parcel of the nature of language. To get inside this view from Halliday, we need to understand the key principles of his account of the relations of language and meaning, and language and society, which make it ideal for

understanding the power and pervasiveness of ideology. In this section, I explain the key principles and systems in his approach, by looking at concepts like "context", "register", "realisation", "instantiation", "metafunction". But I also explore what Halliday says explicitly about language and ideology, and consider some of the motifs of Halliday's account and their importance in a linguistics for the study of ideology.

In a sign of the "exotropic" character of Halliday's theory (see Chapter 1), Halliday describes his linguistics as deeply influenced by Marx. This is not because he took on the official Marxist conception of language, as "superstructure" on top of the economic base of society, in which language was considered to change with changes in the mode of production (Halliday 2003i; Halliday 2015). Halliday explicitly rejects this view (Halliday also rejects Marx's view of ideology - see below). But in his time in the British Communist Party, specifically in the "Linguistics Group", Halliday puzzled over the significance of Marx for the study of language. He has argued that the European linguistic orientation towards valuing minority languages, creoles, spoken language (especially casual speech), non-standard dialects, non-written languages was Marxist in nature, in the sense that it was a kind of linguistics that was "socially accountable", using linguistics "to tackle current problems of social and political life" (Halliday 2015). This attention to language in its socio-ecological environments led Halliday to extend Malinowski's claim about the relations of structure and function into his "metafunctional hypothesis", a view of the relations of the internal organisation of language to the modes of living of our species that is characterised by its dialectic quality. The functional basis of Halliday's theory is, he argues, a Marxist influence.

Halliday locates the "Marxist" (or "Marrist" (Halliday 2003i; Halliday 2015)) view of language within a long tradition in Western thought, in which language "merely reflects, often very imperfectly and with a kind of perverse distortion, the concepts and feelings that inhere, independently of language, in the mind of the speaking subject" (Halliday 2003i: 247). It is a linguistic ideology based on a strongly bounded separation of language and mind, a duality in Western thinking "institutionalised in today's dichotomy between linguistics and cognitive science" (Halliday 2005: 247). Here, reality comes before meaning, and is the same for all people. Language has no active role in the construction of how humans relate to their social and natural environments. This kind of linguistics cannot begin to appreciate the nature or place of ideology in human societies.

Halliday contrasts this wholly materialist account with what he calls the "discursivism" of the postmodernist interpretation of "society as text", in which our encounters in our environment are "a random flux of happening in which there are no regular

proportionalities and the grammar has to impose order by inventing categories of its own" (Halliday & 2004a: 10). This reaction to the Marxist view, he suggests, is an overreaction, in which the discursive is overplayed at the expense of the material (Halliday 2003a: 217). Halliday's position is between these two poles. Language is not beholden to the material, but neither is it wholly separate from it. The phenomena of language in fact makes the distinction of "material" and "discursive" problematic. Language, more than any other human artefact, shows the continuity - the interpenetration, the inseparability - of the material and the discursive. Saussure understood this fact of language, that the unity of the sign was a unity of phenomena of quite distinct orders (see de Saussure 2006, especially section 2a). Halliday extended the Saussurean model, to arrive at a position on the central substance of language which conceives of lexicogrammar as an interface between interfaces. This part of language is constituted by the emergence of an entirely non-material - in fact, Halliday says, "non-phenomenal" - interface, between the two interfaces of language-in-the-body (the expression substance), and language-in-society (the content substance). In this evolutionary process, humans collectively moved from protolanguage to the complex, potentially infinite, socio-semiotic system which defines our species. Language is both embedded in bodily and social experience and yet has a realm all of its own. As Halliday argues:

By "grammaticalising" the process of meaning - reconstruing it so that the symbolic organization is freed from direct dependence on the phenomenal, and can develop a structure of its own - the collective human consciousness created a semiotic space which is truly elastic, in that it can expand into any number of dimensions (Halliday 2002b: 355).

In this process, realisation comes to be more than the arbitrary relations of Saussure's sign. This principle is retained, but it is only one realisational dynamic. Now we have another, which Halliday has called "natural": this is the relationship between lexico-grammar and meaning. We find in the grammars of natural languages a grammaticalising of metaphysical phenomena: for instance, time, agency, causation, deixis, social hierarchies. The systems and their features vary across languages, but in all cases these grammatical systems can be seen as giving back in linguistic form a community's preoccupations and priorities. Yet another feature of the emergence of the interface between interfaces is the possibility of simultaneity, such that all acts of meaning construe experience and enact interpersonal relations at the same time. One cannot construe experience except with regard to some actual or virtual other. This makes these two functions of language interdependent: thus we construe our experience from the position of being a socially positioned speaker, and that position inclines or entitles us to certain ways of construing experience. Language does not prioritise one, as these modes of meaning co-evolved. But these two modes have to be brought

together, and Halliday argues that there is a "semiotic cost" in this principle of simultaneity: language must create a "parallel universe of its own: a world that is made of meaning, and hence instantiated in the semiotic process" (Halliday 2003i: 276). This is the textual function, which enables the two modes of meaning to come together, and by the same token, constrains them from working apart. Halliday argues that it is the "interstices" between the experiential and the interpersonal function that bias comes into the text (Halliday 2003i: 276).

The dialectic motif in Halliday's work extends to his interpretation of the relationship between *langue* and *parole*. Halliday argues that "our late twentieth century linguistics" has "oscillated wildly between system and instance, creating a massive disjunction between the two" (2003[1992]: 375). This dichotomy, he argues, is institutionalised in the separation of pragmatics and linguistics (Halliday 2005: 247). For Halliday, an instance of language is not something distinct and separate from the system of language: rather, these two phenomena are continuous, and indicate simply different perspectives on language, much like the distinction between "weather" and "climate". This dimension of Halliday's theory - theoretically the "cline of instantiation" - is also critical to a robust linguistic model of ideology. For ideologies to become part of a human community's way of organising itself and interpreting its experience, ideas must become a "fashion of speaking". Thus, instances of interaction create ideological habits, which then bear down on instances of interaction. For ideologies to become established and maintained, each instance of interaction must have in its echo established ways of meaning and doing, what Malinowski called the "context of culture".

Behind each context of situation lies a cultural history and memory. This relation is crucial to understanding how ideologies are developed, reinforced, and changed. At the same time, a second intersecting vector is in play. Cultural practices and meanings are related to any specific text via both "instantiation" - the context of situation instantiates the context of culture - and by realisation, in that the context of situation is realised by language as text. Reinforcing Halliday's penchant for dialectics, both of these vectors in his theory operate in a bidirectional fashion. Figure 2 shows these vectors and their relations. For Halliday, the two concepts must be seen in their relation to one another. While in systemic theory "'realization' is held distinct from 'instantiation'" (Halliday 2003f: 435), without the vector of instantiation, our picture of language would be that of a "circular, self-regulating system without any form of exchange with its environment" (Halliday 2002b: 358)<sup>7</sup>. In Chapters 4 and 6, our focus becomes the bottom right hand corner of this diagram - that is to say, I turn

in those chapters to the analysis of individual texts. But in a Hallidayan analysis, one must constantly keep in view that the text is a complex ensemble, by virtue of its relations to the context of situation (via realization), to the linguistic system (via instantiation), and to the context of culture via both of these vectors. It is precisely in this complexity that text is the "niche" for the establishment and maintenance of ideologies. Thus, "text and situation come into being together; so whatever kind of order we set up between them, it must be such that we can start from either end" (2002 [1992]: 15).

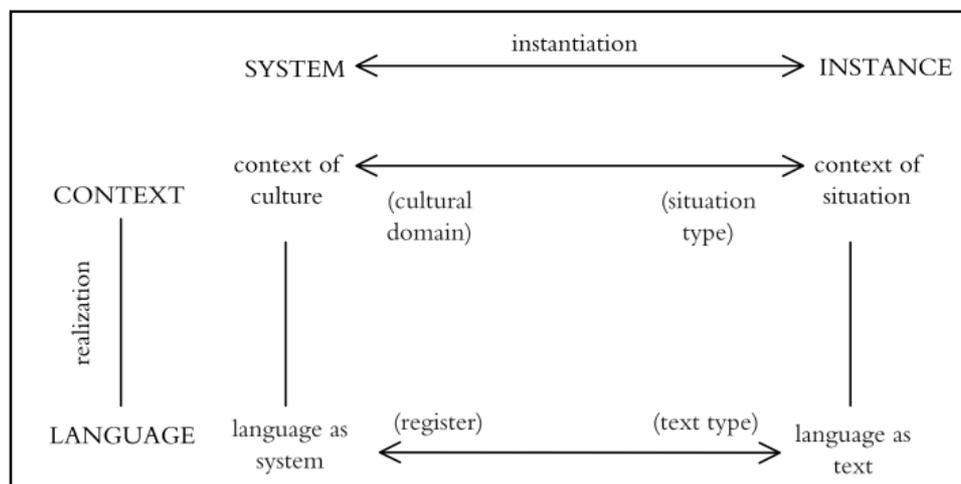


Figure 2: Language and context, system and instance Halliday, 2007, #93840

In making this distinction between the linguistic system and the process of language, via Halliday's cline of instantiation, we can consider what ideology means at these different points. As a Whorfian, Halliday argues that the grammar of every natural language is an "ideological interpretant" (Halliday 2003h: 135), and that the system of language "construes the ideology of society as a whole" (Halliday 2003j: 152). This is the basis for claiming that language is not passive, but active in the construal of reality. In this dynamic, grammar is both enabling and constraining: it "makes meaning possible and also sets limits on what can be meant" (Halliday 2003j). From a phylogenetic perspective, Halliday also suggests that the linguistic system, though responsive and instrumental in cultural evolution, retains aspects of humans' prior modes of living<sup>16</sup>. Halliday has argued that the system of a language develops

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16. This is an interesting echo of Gramsci, he argued that "personality" was similarly a composite of human experiences: "The personality is strangely composite: it contains Stone Age elements and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history" (Hoare & Smith, 1971: 627). Halliday explicitly adopts a Gramscian view of ideology, as we see below.

ideological leanings. One example he develops is the motif of what he calls "growthism". This ideology is underpinned by various covert operations, which are difficult to perceive and shift. This cluster of features includes the systemic connotations associated with "growth" as positive and shrinkage as negative, with a grammaticalising of natural resources as unbounded, and with the grammatical boundaries between the conscious and the unconscious creating a picture of the environment as passive, inanimate, and wholly distinct from humans. This covert motif may have been beneficial in previous epochs: Halliday suggests that it has now run its course.

our dominant grammars lock us in to a framework of beliefs that may at one time ... have been functional, and beneficial to survival, but that have now become inimical to survival and harshly dysfunctional (Halliday 2003a: 225)

A linguistic system thus has some of its own biases, that reflect the cultural evolution of a language system. Distinct forms of living will require and develop different forms and features for the semioticisation of experience. A motif of a similar kind is what Halliday has called the "semantic signature" of our modern era: the metaphoric modes of meaning through which we reconstrue experience as a universe of virtual things (Halliday 2013). This potential has emerged over some hundreds of years, driven at least in part by the emergence of modern science, as Halliday has shown (Halliday & 2004b). Halliday suggests a term for the means by which language has inside itself its history of service: he calls this "semantic creolization". He argues that modern English is "an assortment of many divergent components - a complex product of semantic creolization, in which conflicting models from different stages in our history (pre-settlement, agro-pastoral, iron age, scientific-technological) compete with and complement each other" (Halliday 2003a: 217)<sup>8</sup>.

This key grammatical shift towards metaphoricity began in Renaissance English. It was a process in which the clause was reoriented from a preoccupation with the experiential function towards its place as a message in a flow of text. This syndrome of features shifted the orientation of English grammar away from a preoccupation with the experiential function, and towards a greater "presence" of the textual function. The shift was slight, but it created the means to configure discourse so it could be more technical, and less dependent on its interactants having shared experience. This shift produced the resources for the emergence of "the alienating discourses of modern technology and science" (Halliday 2003j: 169). This shift opened up new combinatorial resources for the production of kinds of ideologies, in offering a new kind of modality for the production of elaborated codes. In this phase in the evolution of English, new potential was created, as a response to new pressures put on the system; this potential is the source for what Whorf would later call a covert motif in Standard

Average European, which he described as a "general objectification tendency" (Whorf 1956k: 144). As Halliday argues:

as our linguistic construction of experience becomes more and more elaborated, and its grammar increasingly remote from its origins in everyday speech, the high prestige, elitist discourse which it engenders becomes available for ideological loadings of all kinds. (Halliday 2003j: 160)

We will see the significance of this motif of metaphor in the case study: the elaborated code is a crucial resource for the rationalisation of violence by states. But this view also leads us Halliday's explicit account of ideology, which he derives from Gramsci, but which echoes his own view of language as "an assortment of many divergent components":

we have to take seriously Gramsci's point that [ideology] is not so much a coherent system of beliefs as a chaos of meaning-making practices, within and among which there is incoherence, disjunction and conflict – which is why it always contains within itself the conditions for its own transformation into something else (Halliday 2007b: 120)

Halliday argues that ideologies are transmitted as constructions that are "typically discordant and rich in internal conflicts but function for the members of the group as coherent systems of beliefs and values (Halliday 2003l: 365). This process of transmission is largely invisible, because, as Halliday argues, the evolution of meaning is a gradual process. This is part of the explanation for the invisible nature of ideology. Our habits of meaning emerge, and if we notice changes, they are likely superficial and partial. Thus, we do not easily notice the "steady, infiltrating linguistic processes by which our ideological constructions are put in place" (Halliday 2003j: 153). The evolutionary process is slow, gradual, and complex. As suggested, language co-evolves, both with humans and with human cultures. Language neither drives nor is driven by culture: they co-evolve.

Despite these systemic ideologies, Halliday argues that language is, at the same time, "neutral" in the sense that it is a potential open for the construction of competing ideologies. As a cultural potential the system ("the more or less permanent, invariant features of the language") construes the "meaning styles, value systems and ideologies that constitute the culture as a whole". In construing the culture as a whole, the system does not favour the perspective of any one group, he argues, not even that of a "ruling class". If the system can be considered hegemonic, this is because "it defines the potential within which meanings can be meant". But the work of differentiating groups within a culture is done by the deployment of resources within the system (Halliday 2003j: 173). He concludes that:

... as a general principle, it is the linguistic system (things about which we have no choice) that divides us from everything else; whereas it is the choice of options within the system (taking up different probabilities) that divides us among ourselves.

This distinction between systemic ideologies, and those that require the configuration

of particular patterns of lexico-grammar is Halliday's basis for his claim that the grammar is neutral. No language, he argues, is "ineluctably tied to any one subculture, or to any one ideology or any one construction of reality". Moreover, there is no semiotic construal that cannot be deconstructed. As Halliday notes, in the process of deconstructing an ideology, the resource of the analyst is not just grammatics, but grammar. This fact, that grammar is the main resource for the deconstruction of ideology is, in the last resort, the proof that the grammar is neutral (Halliday 2003i: 286).