

Grammar as culture:

An anthropological interpretation of Hallidayan linguistics

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This paper makes the argument that systemic functional linguistics is essentially an anthropological or ethnographical way of looking at language and that if this feature is not pointed out, Hallidayan linguistics must be misread, or at least superficially treated. Systemic functional linguistics is not syntax, it is sociolinguistics and ethnolinguistics. It represents the humanistic tradition of language studies and the ultimate goal of this school of language studies is human beings in society and culture. It is a theory about experience, society and culture. Different from scholars on culture and civilization studies (Schafer 2001, Ruan 2011), our perspective on culture is one of linguistics. And different from mainstream linguistics, our perspective on language is one of society, or more exactly, of social semiotics.