

Why Halliday's description of utterance functions should be rejected

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In this article, I present a theoretical review of the systemic functional description of speech functions proposed by Halliday. This description is a core component of the systemic functional description of the interpersonal realm of language.

In my review, I particularly focus on Halliday's idea of 'commodity exchanged' as a variable when systemically mapping a network for speech functions. My study of Halliday's arguments for this variable shows that it is only weakly supported by scholarly work outside of systemic functional linguistics. This is problematic regarding its academic legitimacy. More problematic, however, is that my study shows that the variable is not congruent with a number of systemic functional theoretical prerequisites. These two problems regarding the Hallidayan description of speech functions make me suggest that we discard the notion of 'commodity exchanged' (in a future effort of mapping a more adequate systemic functional description of speech functions).