



Séminaire de recherche  
en Langues de spécialité, analyse de corpus, terminologie et traductologie

**Linguistic Trinitarianism:  
A Unified Approach to Grammar, Lexis and Phraseology**

**GORDON TUCKER**

**Centre for Language and Communication Research**

**Cardiff University**

18 novembre 2019, 14h00-16h00

Université Paris Diderot, Bâtiment Olympe de Gouge, salle 720

Abstract:

Since Halliday's seminal formulation in 1961, lexis has been treated within the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as 'most delicate grammar' (Halliday 1961:267). It is now widely accepted, at least within most functional and cognitive linguistic approaches, that there is extensive interdependence between what have traditionally been considered separate components of a language, 'the grammar' and 'the lexicon', and that these two aspects of linguistic organisation are in fact inseparable.

This current perspective has arisen, to a significant degree, from the findings of corpus linguistic research, where the close relationship between 'lexical items' and their individual grammatical environments has emerged. At the same time, again through corpus linguistic investigation, especially by John Sinclair and colleagues, the extensive presence and nature of idiomatic and phraseological expressions has been observed, giving rise to Sinclair's formulation of the 'Idiom Principle' (1987:320). It is my contention therefore that we need to model 'grammar' 'lexis' and 'idiom/phraseology' as three closely related aspects of a single phenomenon, hence my irreverent reference to the *Trinity* in Christian theology!

In this presentation I will set out, as I have done in published work, and most recently in Tucker (2020 in press), the kind of linguistic architecture that is needed to account for the modelling of this tripartite phenomenon within an SFL framework. This will include an account of the nature of the network of semantic options necessary to cover the range of meanings available to speakers (the system network) and the rich functional-syntactic structure through which the meanings are expressed. I will also address the challenges for this

SFL approach inherent in the work of Michael Hoey, with his theory of Lexical Priming (Hoey 2005), and of John Sinclair and his Idiom Principle. Furthermore, I will address some of the potential difficulties and shortcomings associated with this approach.

I should also make it clear that the model itself is primarily concerned with reflecting the relationship between meaning and form, and makes no claims about lexical processing from a psycholinguistic, neurolinguistic or cognitive perspective.

## References

- Halliday, M.A.K. (1961) Categories of the theory of grammar. *Word* 17. 241-292.
- Sinclair, John McH. (1987) 'Collocation: A progress report'. *Language topics: Essays in honour of Michael Halliday*, ed. by Ross Steele and Terry Threadgold, 319–332. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Hoey, M. (2005) *Lexical Priming: A New Theory of Words and Language*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Tucker (in press 2020) 'Lexical Representation in the Cardiff Grammar: An appraisal'. In G. Tucker, G. Huang, L. Fontaine, E. McDonald (Eds.), *Approaches to Systemic Functional Grammar: Convergence and Divergence*. Sheffield: Equinox.