Research Article

The Hallidayan Stylistics and Creative Writing:Theoretical and Critical Study at the Level of Concepts

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Abstract: **This article tries to argue that systemic functional linguistic (SFL) stylistics or Hallidayan's stilistics can be integrated directly with the creative writing process or vice versa, and can provide a broad insight into determining meaning choices. The determination of this choice of meaning can be done by considering the sources of meaning available in three levels, namely: (1) the level of context of culture and context of situation with its three components, i.e., field, mode, tenor; (2) the level of discourse semantics with its three components, namely ideational (logical & experiential), textual, and interpersonal; and (3) the level of lexicogrammar with its four components, i.e., transitivity & clause complexing, theme/rheme, and mood/residue.These three levels will be integrated with the first four stages in creative writing, namely: (1) conflict; (2) description; (3) characters; and (4) dialogue. This integration thus forms a combined configuration between functional stylistic aspects and the first four stages of creative writing. I'm confident that this configuration is important to know well for creative writing teachers, or students who pursue creative writing, or anyone who wants to improve his or her creative writing competence.**

Introduction

Stylistics, which can be simply described as a study of language styles, can be seen from two different points of view, i.e., (1) from the author's or writer's point of view, and (2) from the reader's point of view. From the author's point of view, stylistics deals with the application of theoretical theory, namely "how to choose and use a particular language style" in the creation of a text. In this case, stylistics is closely related to the theory of the creation of a text, a theory which I believe is capable of giving wiser considerations to the creative writing process. From the reader's point of view, stylistics have more to do with the interpretation and critics of linguistic theory, ie "why a particular style of language is chosen and used". In this case stylists are closely related to the study of text analysis. In this article, as already indicated in the title, I will limit my discussion only to the integration of linguistic theory to creative writing or vice versa. I did not develop the discussion until the application of the style of language to analyze a particular text. Therefore, the main problem lies in the investigation of the role of functional stylistics from the author's point of view, not from the reader's point of view. Functional stylistics, from the author's point of view, I believe, are capable of playing a very important role in the creative writing process. To develop this thesis statement I will move from a brief discussion about: (1) the two different basic concepts of language, followed by (2) the description of the stages in creative writing, then (3) the linkage between the two, and (3) I end with the attitude that is taken on the roles of stylistics in the creative writing process.

The two basic concepts of describing the grammar of language

There are basically two basic concepts of grammatical description of a language, namely: formal, and functional. Formal grammar is a grammar composed with the main purpose of answering the philosophical questions - questions pertaining to the nature and the origin of knowledge (see Matthiessen's *Lexicogrammatical Cartography*, draft 6, 1994: 53). On the other hand formal grammar utilizes categories derived from logic, eg Subject + Predicate, which are then translated into Noun Phrase (NP) + Verb Phrase (VP). Examples of formal grammars, among others are: transformational grammar (TG); categorial grammar; government and binding grammar (GB); generalized phrase structure grammar (GPSP); lexical functional grammar (LFG); head driven phrase structure Grammar (HPSG).

Functional Grammar is a grammar composed with the primary purpose of answering various questions pertaining to grammar as a socio-cultural system (see Matthiessen's *Lexicogrammatical Cartography*, draft 6, 1994: 53). Functional grammar is oriented in the tradition of rhetoric by utilizing categories such as Theme + Rheme; Mood + Residue; Actor + Process + Goal, etc. Examples of functional grammar, among others are: systemic functional grammar (SFG); Prague school work on grammar; functional grammar (FG, by S. Dik); tagmemic grammar; 'west-Coast Functionalism'.

The two groups of linguists differ in their attitudes toward their grammatical analysis approach. Formal linguists regard grammar as a set of rules governing all recognizable grammatical structures in language. They draw strict distinctions between sentences that have fulfilled grammatical rules (which they call well-formed sentences) and sentences that do not meet grammatical rules. So the main concern in

their investigation is in the forms of sentence structures that satisfy the grammatical rules and the relation of the sentences between each other, not in the meaning of the sentences and not to the use of them in different contexts. The labels they use in grammatical analysis are specified on the basis of language forms, not the meaning of language. A linguist who is attracted to this kind of modeling will use more often made up sentences to illustrate different grammatical rules. They do not use sentences derived from authentic sources. In this matter context is not their attention.

On the other hand, functional linguists view language primarily as a meaning system and perform grammatical analyzes to discover how the sentences are arranged in such a way that makes them possible to expose and to exchange meanings reciprocally. The main concentration of their attention is not on the difference between forms that satisfy grammatical rules and forms that are inconsistent with grammatical rules, but on the merit or virtue of a form of expression for a communicative purpose within a particular cultural context and situational context. Their attention is devoted to the functions of their structures and constituents and to the meanings of their structures and constituents in the context of cultural and situational contexts. And the grammatical labels they use in the analysis are determined by the concept of meaning. Linguists who are concerned about such a model of description tend to use data derived from authentic sources in specific cultural contexts and situational contexts. What they see is what they get. They insist that the meaning of the sentence need not be traced to the deep structure. They insist that the illustrations in the grammatical analysis are as far as possible attempted not to use made up sentences.

Thus the obvious distinction between formal groups and functional groups lies primarily in the involvement of the context and the importance of socio-cultural and communication functions in the ways of viewing language. The following two quotes confirm their differences of opinion:
 From now on I will consider a language to be a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements. (Chomsky, 1957: 13)
Language is a part of the social system …. I see language essentially as a system of meaning potential (Halliday, in Parret, 1974: 85-86). A language is a resource for making meaning, an indefinitely expandable source of meaning potential; … (Halliday, 1994: 16)

While Chomsky does not involve the importance of the socio-cultural aspects of language, Halliday claims that "language is a part of the social system" that he views the language "essentially as a system of meaning potential" (Halliday in Parret, 1974: 85-86). For Halliday language is a source of meaning, namely – a source of potential meaning that can be developed indefinitely; ... (Halliday, 1994: 16). In Halliday's view, grammar means lexicogrammar – that grammar should involve the vocabulary. He believes that there is a connection between: (1) grammar and semantics; (2) behavioral potential, meaning potential and grammatical potential; and (3) in his perspective there is a continuity between 'to do', 'to mean',

and 'to say', i.e., between acting or behaving, exposing the meaning of the acting or behaving, and actualizing this meaning in the form of language orthographically or orally. In the form of a diagram I will illustrate the relation and simultaneously whit what Halliday means by language as a potential system of meaning in the following Figure.
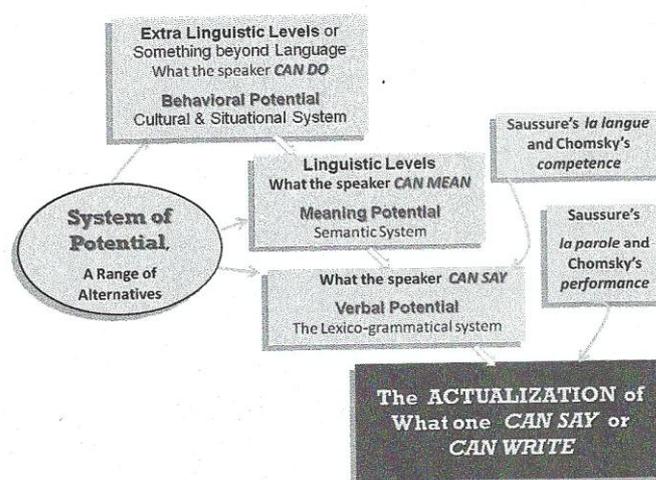

Figure 1: The actual seen against the background of the potential.

To understand a person's actual language (la parole – Chomsky's term) or vice versa, to produce language (we notice the red box at the bottom), we must pay attention to a number of potential backgrounds: verbal potential (WHAT ONE CAN SAY), meanings potential (WHAT ONE CAN MEAN), and behavioral potential (WHAT ONE CAN DO). Perhaps this is one proof of God's Mercy, which is provided before us, i.e., unlimited choices: the choice to do something or to behave; The choice to interpret our deeds or behavior, and the choice to determine the language to convey that meaning.

In contrast to Halliday, the definition given by Chomsky releases the relevance of the socio-cultural aspects of the language. Through the distinction and separation he puts forward between competence and performance, he releases the study of the language rules of performance from socio-cultural studies, which actually determines the use of the context of the system of rules of language when the system is used in socio-cultural interactions. Competence is separated from performance. This kind of Chomsky's attitude (ie separating la parole from la langue) is in fact different from Saussure's attitude, where *la parole* – a term Chomsky refers to as deriving from performance, is not separated from *la langue*. Both Chomsky and Saussure actually have the same theoretical basis, that is psychology, but they differ in their attitude to the interconnectivity between the components in their concept. For Chomsky competence refers to the ideal. Competence refers to the human being separated from its attachment to context. Competence, for Chomsky, refers only to a rigorous understanding of the language rule system. Competence does not deal with performance – not with language for social interaction, but with one's ability to produce, from a limited set of rules, unlimited number of

sentences. When it is integrated with creative writing, the attitude of separating competence from this performance can instantly reveal consequences, i.e., the author only knows the grammatical rules of the language he will use, but he does not know when he should use them, which socio-cultural option he should choose. This can be a hindrance in the creative process. I believe that this is not the target of improving competence in creative writing.

This article is not intended to solve the polemic of the concept of language that emerged from the 60s to the present, especially between the formalist group (Chomskyan), which emphasizes the approach of psychology and mathematics, and functionalist groups (Hallidayan), which put forward the importance of socio-cultural approach. What I want to do is to develop the discussion from the perspective of the socio-cultural aspect, not with the main concern on the language substance (phones, phonemes, words, sentences), but on the external aspects of the cultural context and situational context, which contributes to the selection of meanings at the level of semantic discourse; which contributes to the selection of words and sentences at the level of lexicogrammar; and which in turn all the actualization is actualized in the form of language (text or discourse) either in spoken or written form. It is this process of language production that becomes the basis of functional stylistics and, I believe, will be beneficial to the improvement of creative writing process.

If ever Chomsky and Halliday agree that psychology and socio-culture can be integrated into the definition of language, perhaps the definition of the language will read as follows: Language is a set of spoken sounds or a set of orthography written by human beings after they engage in certain cultural and situational interactions, and with their ability to reason, to make choices for behaving or doing a certain action (occurring at the level of cultural context and situational context), to determine the choice of meaning to make others in the interaction understand the meaning of his behavior or action (occuring at the semantic level of discourse), to determine the choices of words and sentences (occurring at the level of lexicogrammar) to actualize his choices in the level of cultural context and semantic level of discourse in spoken or written language.

The logic can be described as follows: in everyday life man can not be separated from his involvement with the socio-cultural activities. He is always in a cultural context and situational context. In determining choices both at the level of cultural context and situational context as well as on the linguistic level it is not possible for him not to use his reasoning abilities. So, in my opinion, psychology, mathematics and culture should be integrated into the definition of language.

Stylistic and creative writing

It has been stated at the beginning of the introduction that the stylistics in this article is viewed from the author's perspective, not from the reader's point of view. This kind of view is closely related to creative writing – in the sense that an author should be armed with a mastery of the language style

theory in addition to creative writing theory. The theory of language style can actually be said as a language theory, or more precisely the theory of language production. Any aspect that may be raised in this theory must be taken into account before a word, or a phrase, or a clause is expressed in oral and written form. Understanding the theory of language style means understanding the theory of language production. Related to this, an author will have a broader range of expression choices to convey the message he or she wants to pour. It is Halliday's concept of language, I believe, that is concerned directly to meet the needs of such authors. The elaboration of the Halliday's concept in **Figure 2** with the idea of the production of a language or text can be described as follows:
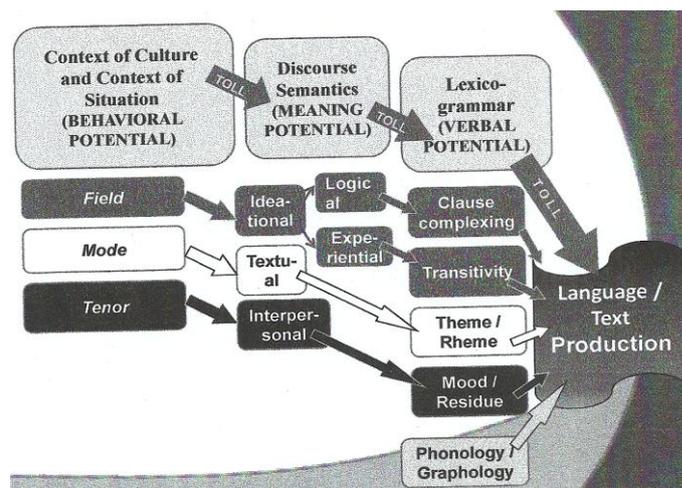

Fig. 2: Halliday's Language Production

Figure 2 above illustrates the interrelationship between: cultural context and situational context (context of culture and context of situation) at the outside level of language, discourse semantics at the level of potential meaning, lexicogrammar at the level of verbal potential, and the production of language or text at the level of final actualization. The cultural context and situational context have three aspects that serve to motivate the meaning of the text. They are:

(1) **Field** (we notice the red line under the Context of Culture and Context of Situation – BEHAVIORAL POTENTIAL). The **field** of discourse is the **field of human experience** covered by text and its purpose in its coverage. The **field** of discourse refers to what is happening, to the nature of the ongoing social action: what is actually being engaged by the perpetrators, in which language participates as a particular constituent element.

(2) **Mode** (we notice the white path under the Context of Culture and Context of Culture and Context of Situation – BEHAVIORAL POTENTIAL). The Means of Discourse is the nature of the text and the role of the language in it. Discourse means pointing to the part played by the language, which is expected by the perpetrators to play the language in the situation: the symbolic organization of the text, its position, and its function in context, including its channel (whether spoken or written, or some

combination of both), the rhetorical mode, that is, what the text will deal with in terms of persuasion, explaining, educating, and the like. (3)

(3) **Tenor** (we notice the blue path under the Context of Culture and Context of Situation – BEHAVIORAL POTENTIAL). The Tenor of Discourse is a social relation between a speaker or an author with an audience or reader. It refers to those who participate, to the nature of their celibacy, their position and role: what kinds of relationships exist among the perpetrators, including the fixed and temporary relationships, the kind of speech role they play in a conversation or a whole set of relationships that collectively have meaning in which they are involved?

All three are motivational features, called, in Ruqaiya Hasan (1981) terminology "motivational relevances", which are further realized in three types of meanings called three metafunctional meanings, at the semantic level of discourse:

(1) **Ideational or Experiential Meaning** (we notice the red path below the semantic level of discourse = discourse semantics). The Ideational Meaning is a function of representation. This meaning is divided into two, namely: logical and experiential. We use this meaning to record our experience. This Ideational Meaning provides an overview of the reality of experience that is logically contained in the text;

(2) **Textual Meaning** (We notice the white path below the semantic level of discourse = discourse semantics). This Textual Meaning has a textual function. We use this meaning to organize experiential, logical, and interpersonal meanings in a linear and coherent text.

(3) **Interpersonal Meaning** (we notice the blue path below the semantic level of discourse = discourse semantics). This Interpersonal Meaning has an interpersonal function. We use this meaning to record interactions, and show how defensible we know our proposition;

These three metafunctions of meaning are then realized in descriptive metalanguages, consisting of three devices, namely:

(1) **The Clause Complexing and Transitivity** (we notice the red line under the lexicogrammatical level). **This Clause Complexing** is a function for choosing clauses: whether it is a parathactic clause or a hypotactic clause. **Transitivity** is a function to define a choice that includes: Process Type, i.e., Verb type: whether the verb is relational, verbal, mental, behavioral, material, or existential; Participant Role (= role of noun or noun phrase as the doer of an action or as an object targetted by an activity represented by a verb); Circumstances (= where, when, why, and how activities are implemented or occur).

(2) **Theme / Rheme** (we notice the white path under the lexicogrammar). **Theme** is a function for determining the choice of clause messages or the psychological subject of the clause or the beginning of what is in the mind of the speaker or writer that he wants to convey,

while Rema (Rheme) is a function to state everything related to the Theme.

Mood / Residue (blue path under lexicogrammar). **Mode** is a function to determine which choice will be positioned in front of the process (verb), whereas Residue is a function to give predication on who is positioned.

If we look at the idea that behavioral potential as social semiotics can be recorded in language (Halliday, in Paret, 1974: 86) and the fact that none of the world's societies can exist without culture (Brown, 1980: 123) , then we are in the right position to agree that language and culture, as Brown states (1980: 124) can not be separated.

Brown claims that language and culture are intricately *"intrically interwoven such that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture"*- In relation to this issue Halliday explicitly affirms the importance of culture in its language conception, as it can be seen in Figure 2 above. For Halliday it is not possible that the language appears without context, and this context is nothing but the cultural context (cultural) and situational context. Both of these are the first triggers in the birth process or language production, with detailed descriptions as follows:

(1) Because we engage in **socio-cultural interactive activities**, we must make choices in behaving or doing things (the level of context of culture / context of situation).

(2) Because in the socio-cultural interaction we **must make others understand us**, we must determine the choice of meaning (discourse semantic level).

(3) Since we must **determine the choice of meaning**, we must determine the choice of words and clauses to realize that meaning (lexicogrammatical stage).

To achieve better creative writing competencies, we should not only pay attention to the steps in creative writing, but also to the components in the language production process (Fig 2). Components in the process of language production and the steps in this creative writing should be looked at together and we integrate them to create better creative writings.

Stages of creative writing and components of language production

The scope of creative writing is very broad. It includes creative writing in both fiction and non-fiction. In this article what I mean by creative writing is creative writing that is limited only to the process of short story writing. So what I mean by the stages in creative writing here are the stages related to the development of the story from the initial thinking to the final product that has been refined in short story writing. I use the term creative writing to refer to the creation of short stories. I intend to set aside the stages of short story writing by Freeman (1977) with the theory of language production that I sought from Halliday (1974, 1995). This juxtaposition demonstrates that integration of Halliday's language production theory component with Freeman's creative writing stages can provide a more complete strategy insight into the creative writing process.

Freeman (1977: 8) believes that creative writing is a combination of skill and art. What he means by skill is "there are a number of precise ways to learn", and with art, he means "there is a group of people who already have a talent in creative writing, and such can not be learned." In relation to creative writing as a skill, he puts forward 10 stages: (1) conflict, (2) description, (3) characters, (4) dialogue, (5) ideas and credibility, (6) Development and closing, (7) sentences and paragraphs, (8) words, (9) language styles, and (10) avoid attenuating the stock of reader responses. Due to the fact that the development of the story will be influenced by the first four stages and that each of these stages can be directly linked to language production, I focus on this discussion on the four stages of accompaniment with Halliday's language production theory.

The *first* important thing to do before you start is to plan an outline of the story with a conflict within it. A conflict is an opposition between two or more opposing forces (it can be between a man and nature, or a man with another man, or a man with society, or a man with his internal problems), which is generally the core of any fictional story line. A conflict must exist in any story, whether it is in a written story, or in a drama or a film. A complete draft of the story includes two things in conflict (A vs B), reason for conflict (C), and conflict resolution factor (D). See Figure 3 for illustration.

The three aspects of this conflict arise in line with the development of the plot. Conflict is the initial incidence of the story. For reasons that are behind it, conflicts allow for a series of events to develop and bring about complications. With its completion factor, the conflict allows:

(1) the series of events that bring the story to a climax, that is, when the strongest dramatic tension arises and causes a gesture of whether the story will be tragic or happy, and

(2) the series of events that lead the story to the denouement or catastrophe. The language that composes this plot plot is the narrative language, which can be intercrossed with descriptive language.
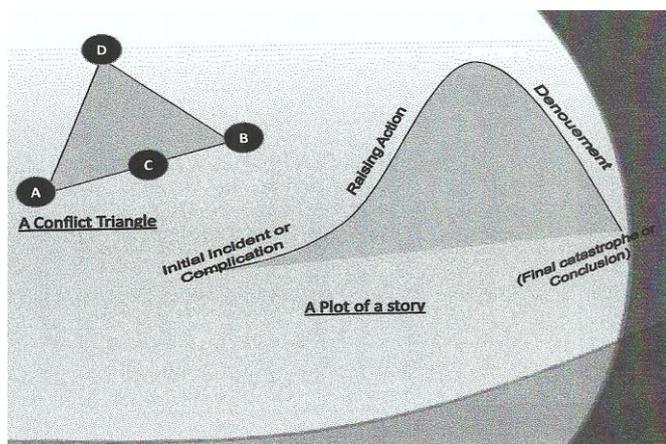

Fig. 3: A Conflict Triangle and a Plot of a story

From the perspective of the cultural context and situational context (behavioral potential), the first four stages of creative writing can be described as follows: *First*, **conflicts** reinforce the field of discourse in the sense that conflict contributes to the development of the plot, namely the development of

human experience that includes verbal processes, mental processes, behavioral process, material processes, and existential processes, which are strung together with a series of cause and effect relations.

It is through this field that people express their experience, which is further realized through the selection of ideational meanings (logical and experiential relations) at the semantic level of discourse, and the election of complex clauses and transitivity at the lexico-grammatical level. A good creative writing design can make it easier for a writer to compose a perfect creative story that is neatly arranged in both the presentation and the perfection of its development.

The *second* important point concerns withs the problem of **description**, which can be illustrated through the following figures.
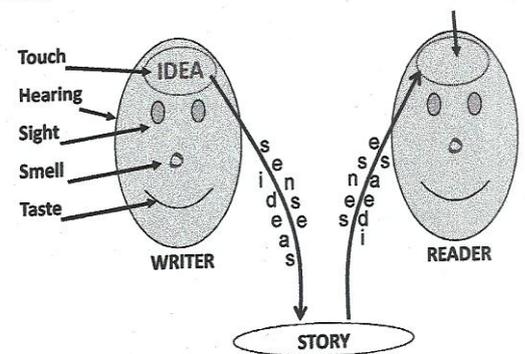

Fig. 4: Background Sketch (Adopted from Freeman, 1977 : 25)

The author's idea of an event setting is formed by the five senses, namely: **touch** (*sense organ: skin; stimuli, e.g.: cold*), **smell** (*sense organ: nose; stimuli, e.g.: chemical*), **taste** (*sense organ: tongue; stimuli, e.g.: chemical*), **hearing** (*sense organ: ear; stimuli, e.g.: sound*), **sight** (*sense organ: eye; stimuli, e.g.: light*). In a movie, we get a sound track and in a restaurant shoot, for example, we expect to hear the sounds of people walking, joking, and maybe the sound of clattering plates. In a written story, on the contrary, we can go three steps better and involve the description of the sense of touch, and also quite important engaging the sense of smell. If we can incorporate this idea into the reader's mind, he will feel himself together with the actors in the story.

The descriptions related to the Halliday's language production concept are slightly different from those between conflict and language production. Viewed from the level of cultural context and situational context (behavioral potential), **conflict** reinforces **the field of discourse**, but the **description** reinforces **the mood of the discourse** – in the sense that the author wants to make the reader create the same idea with his idea. The author hopes that what is in his imagination should exist in the reader's imagination. All of this, in turn, reinforces the process of selecting the textual aspects at the discourse

semantic level, and the selection of the Theme / Reme at the lexic-grammatical level.

After the authors have determined the conflict (including the conflict triangle and the plot of the story (see Figure 3), and also the setting of the background of the events, as well as the effort to draw up the sketches (Figure 4), the authors need to define the actors or characters in the story and their characterization. This is the third important thing. There are three important points in this respect:

(1) determining the number of characters,
(2) determining the point of view of the story (view point, eg omniscient, limited omniscient, first person, or objective) that we make it as the base to start writing, and
(3) determining the sketches of the characters (how they look, what they do, what they say, what they think, and how other characters think about them).

The first point reinforces the **field of discourse** – in the sense that the determination of the number of characters, which will be related to the selection of processes of any kind, requires the ability to reveal the field of human experience covered by the text and the purpose of its coverage. Furthermore, this discourse field triggers the selection of ideational meanings at the semantic level of discourse, and the selection of the ideational meaning triggers the selection of sentence types (Unit Complexes) and Transitivity at the lexico-grammatical level.

Second and third items reinforce the mood of discourse – in the sense that these two points reveal the writer's ability to pour out what is in his mind. Furthermore, this mood of discourse triggers the selection of textual meaning in the semantic level of discourse and the selection of Theme / Rheme on the level of lexicogrammar.

The *fourth* important thing has to do with dialogue. Conversations or dialogue can give a very good impression of a character, and this conversation is a more dramatic presentation of the story. A good conversation should sound natural and encourage the reader to see in his imagination how things are done. In these circumstances, the story becomes more alive and the reader can enjoy it.

When associate dialogue with the Hallidayan language production theory, we may say that dialogue reinforces the appearance of the **field of discourse** – in the sense that the author uses it to enhance the role of social relationships among the characters. At the semantic level of discourse, dialogue reinforces interpersonal meaning – in the sense that it records interactions, and indicates the extent to which a character is able to sustain the prosposition of its expression. This metafunction reinforces the selection of Mood/Residue on the lexicogrammar level.

The juxtaposing the first four stages of Freeman's creative writing and Hallidayan language production components

In order to portrait the configuration of the first four stages of Freeman's creative writing and language production based on

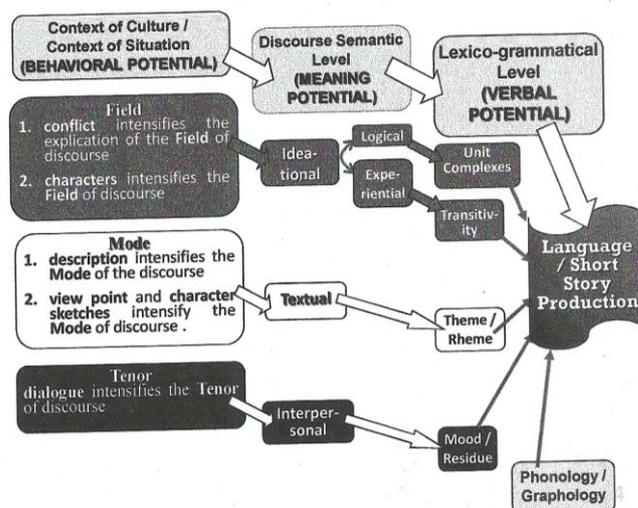Halliday's idea, I put forward a diagram as can be seen in Figure 6.

Fig. 5: Halliday's Language Production and Freeman's four stages of creative writing

This figure is an extension of Figure 2 – in the sense that the first four stages of Freeman's creative writing are integrated with the theory of language production based on Halliday's idea. As can be seen in the diagram that:

(1) Conflict and the determination of the number of characters reinforces the Field of discourse;
(2) Description and determination of the angle of storytelling and character sketching reinforce the means of discourse; and
(3) Dialogue reinforces Discussion.

This is what happens at the level of cultural context and situational context, the top level and non-linguistic nature in which we are faced with the choice of activity or behavior in a social communication.

What happen to the next two levels are:

(1) The Field of Discourse triggers the selection of **ideational meaning** at the discourse semantic level, which further triggers the selection of **unit complexes** and **transitivity** at the **lexicogrammatical** level;
(2) The Mood of Discourse triggers the selection of **textual meaning** at the **semantic level of discourse**, which further triggers the selection of Theme/Rheme on the lexicogrammatical level;
(3) The Tenor of Discourse triggers the selection of **interpersonal meanings** at the **semantic level of discourse**, which further triggers the selection of Mood/Residue on the lexicogramme level.

A better understanding of all components in language production and stages in creative writing can provide a broad range of expression choices that are useful for story writing.

Concluding Notes

Systemic functional stylistics, as the Hallidayan theory of language style, plays an important role in the creation of a story, which can be summarized more or less as follows: (1)

stylistics provides ways of determining into which aspects of the cultural context and situational context the stages of creative writing enter; (2) stylistics provides **a global portrait of the selection of meanings** for the realization of a creative writing stages at the **discourse semantic level**; and (3) stylistics provides a further portrait of global policies toward the selection of words and clauses at the lexicogrammatical level. It is in this way that the scope of broader selection of meanings and their realization are actualized. Therefore, **systemic functional stylistics** – the Hallidayan theory of language style, **should be integrated in the theory creative writing.**

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