

Preface

This publication is based on a series of lectures given at the National University of Singapore in the year 1986. I was preparing them for publication at that time, but for personal reasons, I was unable to complete the task, and they were stowed away and, as I thought, no longer recoverable. However, it turned out that the original and one photocopy had been preserved, the one by Jonathan Webster, who has done so much work as editor, and as a personal friend, to make my writings accessible, and the other by my friend and colleague David Butt, who simply decided that he was not going to throw them away.

Then at some moment, two other friends of mine, Huang Guowen and Chang Chenguang, co-editors of the Springer “M.A.K. Halliday Library Functional Linguistics” Series, came to hear about these lectures and suggested that they might be published as one of the volumes in this series. Jonathan Webster then had them transcribed, by his assistant Peggy Tse, and had the texts checked and all the figures redrawn.

I was pleased to have these lectures brought back to life, and I am extremely grateful to all those people who made it happen. But the problem was how should I revise them? Any extensive revision, with updating of bibliography, would have been impossible; it would have meant writing an entirely new book (which was what I had started to do at that time but never finished). Now, I no longer have the energy, and in any case, I do not know anything of the more recent work that has been done on many of the topics that I touched upon, so there was no possibility of bringing it up to date. So I decided to leave the text just as it was, as my way of introducing a framework of knowledge about language, and ideas about language and learning, to an unknown audience, well versed in English, at a world-class Asian university.

For the same considerations, I have left the text closely linked to its Singaporean context, because that is the context for which it was conceived and in which it was originally presented in spoken form. I had paid several working visits to Singapore and had Singapore listeners in mind; I have not attempted to change this, or to disguise it.

Now, almost thirty years later, it is being recontextualized, in a world with different technology, a different socio-economic order, and different problems and challenges. In its written form, the discourse may seem remote, perhaps somewhat quaint. But I hope it may still be relevant, at least to someone who may be trying to interest an informed and educated audience, not specializing in linguistics, in that most fascinating of all areas of human activity and human knowledge—language.

Guangzhou
May 2015

M.A.K. Halliday

Aspects of Language and Learning

Halliday, M.A.K. - Webster, J.J. (Ed.)

2016, VII, 149 p. 8 illus., 1 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-662-47820-2