

MICHAEL ALEXANDER KIRKWOOD HALLIDAY (1925–2018)

Over the past two years, European linguistics has suffered the loss of two prominent British scholars, Professors Charles Randolph Quirk (12 July 1920 – 20 December 2017)¹ and M. A. K. Halliday (13 April 1925 – 15 April 2018). It is a great loss for Czech linguistics as well, because there was a close personal and also ideological relationship between Czech linguists and these eminent scholars.

Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday was born in England into a family in which he found a solid support for his linguistic interests: his father was a teacher of English and a dialectologist, and his mother had studied French. In 1942, Halliday volunteered for the national services' foreign language training course and was selected to study Chinese because of his ability to differentiate tones. After the training and a year working with the Chinese Intelligence Unit in India he returned to London to teach Chinese. He received a BA honours degree in modern Chinese language and literature at the University of London, and then lived for three years in China, where he studied at Peking University and at Lingnan University before returning to take a PhD in Chinese linguistics at Cambridge. Halliday's first academic position was as assistant lecturer in Chinese, at Cambridge University, from 1954 to 1958. In 1958 he moved to Edinburgh, where he was first a lecturer and then a reader in general linguistics. From 1963 to 1965 he was the director of the Communication Research Centre at University College, London. He also spent a couple of years at universities and academic institutions in the US: in 1964, he was a Linguistic Society of America Professor, at Indiana University; from 1965 to 1971 he was professor of linguistics at UCL; in 1972–73 he was a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioural Sciences at Stanford, and in 1973–74 professor of linguistics at the University of Illinois. In 1974 he briefly moved back to Britain to be professor of language and linguistics at Essex University. In 1976 he moved to Australia as foundation professor of linguistics at the University of Sydney, where he remained until he retired in 1987. He died in Sydney on 15 April 2018, at the age of 93.

When Halliday changed his specialization from teaching Chinese (which he did for 13 years) to linguistics, he found inspiration in two linguistic trends of modern time: the functional approach of his British teacher J.R. Firth and the functional approach of the scholars belonging to the Prague School of structural and functional linguistics. Halliday's grammatical views are known as systemic functional grammar² describing language as a semiotic system and as a systemic resource for meaning. For Halliday, language is a "meaning potential"; he defines linguistics as the study of "how people exchange meanings by 'linguaging'"; his main interest lies in the way meanings are coded into wordings.

1 See the obituary by Libuše Dušková and Aleš Klégr "Remembering Randolph Quirk" in *Linguistica Pragensia* 28, 2/2018, 235–237.

2 See his seminal paper on this model "Categories of the theory of grammar". *Word*, 17 (3), 1961: 241–92, reprinted in Vol. 1 of *The Collected Works of M.A.K. Halliday*. 2002, London: Continuum, 37–94.

There are two specific areas of language study in which the approaches of M.A.K. Halliday and the Prague scholars come closely together: both are reflected in his contribution “Language structure and language function” in *New Horizons in Linguistics* (ed. by John Lyons, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1970: 140–165, with explicit references to the Prague School on pp. 141 and 161), and discussed in more detail e.g. in his book *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (3rd Edition, revised by Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen, Hodder Arnold, 2004; 1st Edition 1985) in Chapter 2 “Towards a functional grammar” (37–63) and in Chapter 3 “Clause as message” (64–105, with a specific reference to the Prague School on p. 64).³

These two areas concern what Halliday calls the ideational component (clause as a representation expressed by transitivity structures) and the textual component, and, in particular, those phenomena related to the theme/rheme articulation (functional sentence perspective or topic-focus articulation, in “Praguian” terms).

Halliday considers an English clause to be a combination of three different structures deriving from distinct functional components: the ideational (which is typically some process with associated participants and circumstances), interpersonal (clause as a verbal exchange between speaker/writer and the audience) and textual (clause as message). How these three sets of options together determine the structural shape of the clause can be illustrated by his English example *The teapot my aunt was given by the Duke* (Halliday 2004, Section 2.6):

The teapot	my aunt	was given	by the Duke
Theme	Subject		Actor
(... as a message)	(... as an exchange)		(... as representation)

As for the textual function (originally called discoursal, see M.A.K. Halliday, “Notes on transitivity and theme in English”, *Journal of Linguistics* 3, 1967: 37–81, 199–244; 4, 1968: 179–215), Halliday distinguishes thematic structure and information structure: while the theme is considered to be the point of departure for the message, the information structure refers to the organization of a text in terms of the functions “given” and “new” (Halliday 1970). The latter structure is, according to Halliday, expressed in English by intonation. Although both the recognition of theme as “a peg on which the message is hung” (Halliday 1970: 161) and the “given — “new” dichotomy as the underlying aspect for the recognition of information structure have been widely discussed in relevant literature world-wide and arguments were adduced to demonstrate that some other criteria are basic, the emphasis on the relevance of intonation is more than valid. One example out of many:⁴ the warning in London underground at the bottom of an elevator is written as “Dogs must be carried”. As Halliday noted, if pronounced with the intonation centre (pitch accent) on the last word (which is the normal intonation pattern in English), the information expressed is valid (and can be paraphrased e.g. by “If you have a dog, you must carry it.”). However, if the

3 See also Vol. 1 of *The Collected Works of M.A.K. Halliday, On Grammar* (edited by Jonathan Webster), London — New York: Continuum, 2002.

4 Halliday M. A. K. (1967) *Intonation and Grammar in British English*. The Hague: Mouton.

warning were pronounced with the pitch accent on the first word, the message would be false (paraphrased e.g. by “If you carry something it must be a dog”, or even “You must carry a dog.”). Interestingly enough (as mentioned by E. Hajičová and P. Sgall in their contribution “Information structure, translation and discourse”, in: *Textologie und Translation*, ed. by H. Gerzymisch-Arbogast et al., Gunter Narr Verlag, Tübingen, 2003: 107–123), the wording in newly built underground stations was “amended” to “Carry dogs”, which actually is no real amendment: under the normal intonation pattern with the pitch accent at the end this warning would be (falsely) interpreted as “You must carry a dog.” To achieve the intended, correct meaning, the instruction must be pronounced with the pitch accent on the first word.

Apart from the introduction of an original model of grammar which inspired a number of linguists all over the world (see e.g. the journal *Functional Linguistics* published by Springer Open, which explicitly mentions a special focus on systemic functional linguistics), the range of M.A.K. Halliday’s other research interests was quite noticeable, covering issues of the role of language in society, the structure of discourse (see his joined monograph with his wife Ruqaiya Hasan *Cohesion in English*, London: Longman 1976), studies in child language development etc. In the present remembrance of Professor Halliday we mention only those aspects of his model for which he explicitly acknowledged the influence of the Prague School writings. It goes without saying that the influence was far from unidirectional as can be seen from the many papers written by Czech scholars, especially those interested in functional syntax and information structure, since the middle of the last century (to mention just a few: František Daneš, Libuše Dušková, Jan Firbas and his followers, Petr Sgall, the writer of this obituary and many others). And even more interestingly, some of the ideas appeared almost simultaneously, without an apparent or direct mutual influence but congenial in substance; this fact was observed and convincingly argued for by a prominent Czech Anglicist J. Tárníková in her contribution “Halliday’s interpersonal component reconsidered” (in Ch. Hopkinson., R. Tomášková and G. Zapletalová, eds, *The Interpersonal Language Function Across Genres and Discourse Domains*, Filozofická fakulta Ostravské univerzity v Ostravě, 2012: 26–36), in which the author points out the closeness between Halliday’s notion of the interpersonal component and Ivan Poldauf’s concept of the third syntactical plan (I. Poldauf, “The Third Syntactical Plan”, in *Travaux linguistiques de Prague 1*, 1964: 241–255).

It goes without saying that M.A.K. Halliday’s footsteps in Praguian linguistic efforts will not disappear even in the future.

Eva Hajičová

Institute of Formal and Applied Linguistics

Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Charles University

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8640-246X

e-mail: hajicova@ufal.mff.cuni.cz