

A. A brief introduction to register theory (see also SGSWE pp. 4-5)

Language varies according to the situation in which it is used, and these varieties of language can be referred to as **registers**. If we examine a text we can make guesses about the situation; on the other hand, if we are in a particular situation we make certain linguistic choices based on that situation. In other words, the language we use needs to be appropriate to the situation in which we use it.

Field, tenor, mode

The linguist Michael Halliday divides these variables into three categories:

- Field, Tenor and Mode.

These three variables combine to form the **register** of the text. Here is an outline of the three categories.

Field: what language is being used to talk about

The field includes:

the topic;
the interactants.

The topic of discourse can be:

- specialised/technical (e.g. talking about the environment etc.);
- everyday (e.g. talking about shopping etc.)

The interactants may have:

- specialised knowledge of the field (e.g. a scientist writing for an article for an academic journal);
- common knowledge of the field (e.g. the readers of a newspaper article).

The **field** determines the use of specialised language, for example whether technical terms or everyday terms are used. It is of course always important for a writer to think about his/her audience (who he/she is writing for), which may be specialist or wide-public (see SGSWE p.4). Look for example at these two examples, one from an academic journal and the other from a daily newspaper.

The net ecosystem exchange of carbon dioxide was measured by eddy covariance methods for 3 years in two old-growth forest sites near Santarém, Brazil. Carbon was lost in the wet season and gained in the dry season, which was opposite to the seasonal cycles of both tree growth and model predictions. The 3-year average carbon loss was 1.3 (confidence interval: 0.0 to 2.0) megagrams of carbon per hectare per year. Biometric observations confirmed the net loss but imply that it is a transient effect of recent disturbance superimposed on long-term balance. (*Science Magazine* 28.11.2003)

Failure to take action to combat climate change will cause environmental catastrophe and cost the global economy \$20 trillion (£10.8 trillion) a year by the end of the century, the pressure group Friends of the Earth says today. In a report based on research from more than 100 scientific and economic papers, the group says allowing global warming to continue unchecked will mean a temperature rise of 4C by 2100, causing economic damage worth up to 8% of global GDP. (*The Guardian* 13.10.2006)

Tenor of discourse: the role relationships between the interactants

The relationships between the interactants varies according to:

- status (ranging from unequal as in the case of a boss/ employee to equal as with friends);
- affective involvement (ranging from high as with friends/family members to low as with business clients);
- contact (ranging from frequent to occasional).

The relationship between interactants influences the formality of the language used (see section "Language differences between registers"). Look for example at these two examples of emails, one from a seminar organiser to a participant (unequal status; low affective involvement; occasional contact) and the other from a family member (equal status; high affective involvement; frequent contact).

We are very pleased to hear that you have been appointed to represent CercleS at the 7th ELP Seminar in Vilnius, Lithuania.

I would be very grateful if you could let me have your full postal address so that we can send you a signed invitation. In the meantime, please find attached the draft programme and other documents concerning the seminar.

HIIII!! thanks sooo much for sponsoring me. im very very grateful. how are things?

so you can probably tell from the late reply of this email that i havent really got myself organised, though i have just sent off my accommodation application form for southampton uni..ooo exciting. ive just recovered from tonsillitis which wasnt fun but im ok now and thats all that matters. any news in italy? not in italy generally, i could look that up on the net if i wanted i mean any news with you?

Mode of discourse: the role language is playing in the interaction

Language can be:

- written;
- spoken;
- written to be spoken (e.g. a political speech).

Language can be:

- spontaneous (e.g. conversation);
- planned (e.g. a composition or article).

The level of **interactiveness** of language varies. There can be the possibility of having:

- immediate feedback (e.g. conversation);
- rapid feedback (e.g. emails);
- delayed feedback (e.g. letters).

Language can:

- accompany an action (e.g. saying *those* while pointing to something);
- describe an experience (e.g. a news report).

Conversation is spontaneous, interactive and often accompanies actions. The language of conversation is characterized by:

hesitations, interruptions etc.;

interrogatives and imperatives;

ellipsis (omitting words/phrases because they are clear from the context);

use of the pronouns I, you, we;

low frequency of nouns (low lexical density - SGSWE p. 19).

Look at this extract from a conversation between two students.

A: What are you doing this summer? Are you going to the beach? Are you going to the mountains? Or...?

B: Possibly, yeah. I want to do some traveling. Um, I may go up to Switzerland and visit a friend – check out the mountains there. Probably – I'll definitely hit the beach. Uh, I really wanna try and make it over to Eastern Europe. I wanna go see Romania. Even bought myself a little Romanian dictionary – I'm all set.

A: Wow.

Formality/informality v. Written/spoken

A great deal of spoken language is informal; the interactants are of equal status and have a close affective involvement e.g. conversation between friends. On the other hand, written language is often formal (the interactants do not know each other e.g. academic prose). Yet there is also formal spoken language and informal written language.

formal spoken language (e.g. conversation between people of unequal status; speeches)

Look at these examples:

I see. Um, good, Mr. Hutchinson. It was very pleasant interviewing you and we'll let you know of our decision. I think we can wind up now. We'll let you know of our decision as soon as I've decided the matters together with the committee. You'll be hearing from us. (taken from a job interview).

For too long, the citizens of the Middle East have lived in the midst of death and fear. The hatred of a few holds the hopes of many hostage. The forces of extremism and terror are attempting to kill progress and peace by killing the innocent. And this casts a dark shadow over an entire region. For the sake of all humanity, things must change in the Middle East. (taken from a political speech, Bush, 25.06.2002)

informal written language

(e-mails/letters between friends; some writers for popular newspapers/magazines/websites use a very informal register to create a "friendly" relationship with their readers)

TAKE a long look at these amazing creatures—because it could be your last chance.

For a shocking new report carried out by experts from around the globe has found that up to 60,000 species are becoming extinct EVERY YEAR.

The main culprits? Man and spiralling climate change, which together have had a devastating impact on the innocent residents of our planet. (News of the World 22.10.2007)

Bibliography

Eggs, S. (2004) *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*, 2nd Edition, New York/London, Continuum.

Halliday M.A.K. and Hasan R. (1989) *Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-semiotic Perspective*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

B. Language differences between registers

Grammar

1. The quantifiers *a lot of/lots of/loads of* are associated with informal language, whereas *much/a great deal of* (+ uncountable) and *many/a great many* (+ countable) are more formal.

See SGSWE pp. 63 and 75.

Examples:

There were a lot/lots/loads of people... (informal)

Much/a great deal of crime goes unreported. (formal)

Many/a great many people had avoided the delays ... (formal)

2. The contracted forms of auxiliary verbs (you're, I'll etc.) are often used in spoken English (SGSWE p. 27) and informal written English e.g. informal letters and e-mails. Negative contraction (it wasn't, you shouldn't etc.) are nearly always used in spoken English and informal written English, but rarely in formal written registers such as academic prose. See the figure on p. 242 of SGSWE.

3. Negation with *no* is very rare in conversation (informal spoken language), which prefers negative + any. See SGSWE p. 245.

Examples:

They had no sympathy for him. (formal written)

They didn't have any sympathy for him. (spoken)

4. *Going to* for future prediction is rare in formal written registers such as academic prose.

Examples:

... it will run out of kinesic energy ... (ACAD)

«It's going to be hard to convince him» (CONV)

5. Passives are common in formal written registers such as academic prose and newspapers but rare in spoken language. SGSWE pp. 167-169.

Example:

*Saddam **was seized** on Saturday night in a rudimentary hiding place dug into the earth on the modest farm of his former cook, close by the village of al Ouja where he was born 66 years ago. The dramatic news was announced to the world by Paul Bremer, the Americans' chief administrator in Iraq.*

*"Ladies and gentlemen, **we got him**," he said.*

(The Guardian, 15.12.2003)

See also Cutting Edge Module 4

6. The relative pronoun *that* is the most common in conversation, *who* is the most common in newspapers and *which* in academic prose.

SGSWE pp. 285/6.

Examples:

the car that was going past (CONV)

the girl that lives down the road (CONV)

a woman who has been missing for weeks (NEWS)

the ratio which will give an acceptable performance (ACAD)

7. Academic prose uses a lot of linking adverbials

e.g. *moreover, however, therefore*

See SGSWE p. 392.

Vocabulary

1. Informal language uses colloquial lexis (slang, swearing etc.) while formal language uses neutral/formal lexis (no slang, polite formulae e.g. *Dear Sir* in letters)

Examples:

informal: get, kid, guy/bloke, stressed out, rip off etc.

neutral/formal: obtain/become, child, man, under stress, cheat etc.

2. Abbreviations can often be found in more informal registers.

Example:

Have you got all the info? (information)

I'm enjoying uni. (university)

To understand whether a word is informal or neutral/formal, look it up in the dictionary.

Punctuation

In informal writing, you can often find:

exclamation marks !

dots ...

dashes -

These serve to create the impression that the writer is talking to the reader.

C. Linking in the sentence

When sentences consist of more than one clause, these clauses are often linked by **conjunctions**. There are two kinds of conjunctions, **coordinators** and **subordinators**. Coordinators are used to link two or more **main clauses**: in other words, clauses which are considered to be of **equal importance**.

Coordinators

and, but, or, yet, both...and, not only...but also, either...or, neither...nor

Taking regular exercise **both** helps you stay slim **and** reduces the risk of heart attack.

People criticise the party, **but/yet** they continue to vote for it.

Professor Wright is **not only** an authority on slavery in democratic Athens, **but** she has **also** done extensive research into the position of women in the ancient world.

The law states that detainees should **either** be taken to court within 48 hours of their arrest, **or** released without charge.

The government has **neither** reduced inflation **nor** created new jobs.

Subordinators

Some sentences consist of a main clause and an **adverbial clause**, which gives additional information about the **circumstances** of the main clause. Adverbial clauses are **dependent** on the main clause and are often introduced by **subordinators**.

Adverbial clauses of time

These can be introduced by the subordinators:

after, as, as soon as, before, since, until, when, whenever, while, hardly...when, scarcely...when

Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay and lived in India **until** his mother decided to send him back to Britain and entrust his upbringing to foster parents.

They had **hardly** begun their studies at Oxford University, **when** the First World War broke out and irrevocably changed the course of their lives.

The subordinators of time **after, before, on, when, whenever, while, since, until** can introduce *-ing* clauses when the subject of the main clause is the same as that of the subordinate clause.

After interviewing over one thousand applicants, the board picked fifty candidates for their management training programme.

On becoming conductor of the Bakewell Choral Society, Mr Barnes introduced a greater number of modern works into the choir's repertoire.

On is used to indicate that one action happened immediately after another. As a subordinator of time, it is only used with the *-ing* form.

***On** he became conductor...

When can only be used with the *-ing* form if its meaning is similar to that of **while** or **whenever**.

When studying for exams, students become short-tempered and irrational.

When travelling abroad, one should always take out health insurance.

When the painting arrived in Spain, it was placed under heavy security.

***When** arriving in Spain, the painting was placed under heavy security.

Adverbial clauses of reason

Because is the most commonly used subordinator of clauses of reason. It is not very often found at the beginning of the sentence.

The case is to be reopened, **because** doubt has been cast on the reliability of some of the key witnesses.

Because of is a preposition.

Bookings for the States are 60% higher than last year, **because of** the weakened dollar.

As and **since** are used in particular when the "reason" is already known to the addressee. They are often found at the beginning of the sentence.

As/Since English is an international language, some traditionalists still hold the view that the teaching of foreign languages in school is a waste of time.

For is used in more formal writing. It is never found at the beginning of the sentence.

After a long and successful career she left the world of the theatre, **for** she felt that her energies would be better spent in politics.

The non-finite **-ing form** and the **past participle** may also be used in clauses of reason.

Being a teacher herself, she realised that her son was not receiving a good education.

If the subject of the main clause is different from that of the subordinate clauses, the **-ing** form follows the subject.

The evidence **being** insubstantial, the case had to be dropped.

***Being** the evidence...

The **past participle** is only used with passive meaning.

Caught up in a web of scandal, he was forced to resign.

Adverbial clauses of purpose

The most common way of introducing clauses of purpose is by using **the infinitive**.

A group of world-famous musicians have organised a concert **to raise** money for third-world development.

For + -ing form is not used in clauses of purpose.

*They organised a concert **for raising** money...

For + -ing form is only used to describe the function of an object.

This machine was used **for grinding** corn.

In order to and **so as to** can be used instead of the infinitive of purpose. They must be used to introduce a negative clause of purpose.

The research unit has carried out a survey **to discover/in order to discover/so as to discover** whether video games can lead to aggression in young people.

BUT

She wrote her first novels under a pseudonym, **in order not to reveal/so as not to reveal** (not to reveal *) her true identity.

In order that and **so that** are used when the main clause and the subordinate clause have two different subjects.

Buckingham Palace is to be opened to the public once again this summer, **in order that/so that** people can have another chance to see the riches of our royal heritage.

When the main clause is in the past **in order that** and **so that** are followed by **would, could, should** or **might**.

The plundered treasures were hidden in secret depositories, **in order that/so that** no-one **would/could/should/might** learn of their existence.

In case and **lest** are used when the main clause expresses a precaution. With present/future reference, **in case** is followed by a present tense or **should**. The use of **should** indicates that the event described in the subordinate clause is less likely to occur.

All merchant shipping is now to be escorted by naval vessels **in case** there **are/should be** any further attacks.

When the main clause is in the past, **in case** can be followed by a past tense or **should**.

All merchant shipping was escorted by naval vessels **in case** there **were/should be** any further attacks.

Lest is associated with a very formal style, and is usually followed by **should**.

The work was never published during the author's lifetime **lest** he **should** be accused of anti-Soviet tendencies.

Adverbial clauses of result

Result clause are introduced by **so, so...that, such...that**. **So** is followed by an adjective or adverb. **Such** is followed by an adjective + noun.

The Browns had very little faith in the state school system, **so** they decided to educate their children at home.

The gale was **so** strong **that** it destroyed over fifteen million trees.

There was **such** a strong gale **that** over fifteen million trees were destroyed.

Adverbial clauses of concession

Although and **though** are used to introduce a clause which makes the main clause seem surprising. **Though** is rather more informal in style.

The film was shown in the early evening **although** it contained some extremely disturbing scenes of violence.

Though (and also **as**) can be used with an adjective at the beginning of the clause of concession.

Happy **though/as** they were in their new environment, the children felt homesick. (= although they were happy...)

Even though has the same meaning as **although** and **though**, but with added emphasis.

While and **whereas** are used when the main clause and the subordinate clause contain two contrasting facts or actions.

Pneumonia and typhoid are caused by bacteria, **while/whereas** measles and smallpox are viral diseases.

The meaning of **although** can also be expressed by **despite** or **in spite of**. These are prepositions, and are therefore followed by a noun or gerund.

Despite her loss of popularity/losing popularity, the Prime Minister refused to change her policies.

The modal verb **may** is used in clauses of concession when the speaker is willing to concede a point against his argument or wish. Its meaning is similar to "I admit that..., but..."

The president **may** have granted an amnesty, but people are still being detained for speaking out against the government.

Adverbial clauses of condition

The most common subordinator in conditional clauses is, of course, **if**.

If it had not been for the efforts of the Suffragette movement, women might not have been given the vote until much later.

Unless has the meaning of «except if».

Unemployment will continue to increase **unless** some new solutions are found.

When a specific condition is stated, **if** can be replaced by **as long as**, **on condition that**, **provided** or **providing**.

All students may apply for the scholarship **on condition that/provided/providing/as long as** they have completed their third year of studies

Even if expresses concession in an if-clause.

She would not have been able to pay the fine, **even if** she had sold the house.

Relative clauses (see also SGSWE pp. 279-291)

There are two types of relative clauses, **restrictive relative clauses** (also called **identifying** or **defining relative clauses**) and **non-restrictive relative clauses** (also called **non-identifying** or **non-defining relative clauses**).

Restrictive relative clauses tell us **which** or **what sort** of person or thing we are talking about.

A scab is someone **who/that** continues working during a strike.
The hospital was full of children **who/that** had been injured in the fighting.
The books **which/that** belong in this section are labelled with a white sticker.

Look at what happens if the relative clauses are removed from these sentences.

A scab is someone.
The hospital was full of children.
The books are labelled with a white sticker.

From these examples, it is clear that a **restrictive relative clause** is a necessary part of the sentence: the first example makes no sense at all; the second makes sense, but its meaning is unclear as we do not know whether the children were patients or merely visitors to the hospital; the third is not a truthful statement, as it leads us to believe that all the books have stickers, which is not the case.

A **non-restrictive relative clause**, on the other hand, is not necessary in the sentence, but serves to give additional information.

One of the pioneers of radioactivity was the Polish-born physicist Marie Curie, **who** was the first scientist to receive two Nobel prizes.

In this case it is possible to omit the relative clause and still have a perfectly acceptable, clear and truthful sentence.

One of the pioneers of radioactivity was the Polish-born physicist Marie Curie.

If you have two independent sentences and you want to join them into one longer sentence with a relative clause, you will use a **non-restrictive relative clause**. There are a few important things to remember about this type of relative clause:

- a) the relative pronouns used are **who**, **which** and the possessive relative pronoun **whose** (**that** is only found in **restrictive relative clauses**);
- b) a **non-restrictive relative clause** is always separated from the main clause by a comma/commas;
- c) **who** and **whose** must come immediately after the person they refer to;
- d) **which** can either refer to the thing immediately preceding it, or to the whole clause preceding it.

Steven Spielberg's film tells the story of the German industrialist Oskar Schindler, **who** saved the lives of more than a thousand Jews during the Second World War.
Henri Matisse was one of the leaders of the Fauve Movement, **which** developed in Paris after 1904, and was characterised by the use of intense colours.
Within months of its election victory, the government announced plans to privatise the health service, **which** produced a huge public outcry.
Charles Darwin, **whose** revolutionary theory of evolution was to shock many of his Victorian contemporaries, failed to graduate in Medicine at Edinburgh University.

BUT WE DO NOT SAY

*Charles Darwin failed to graduate in Medicine at Edinburgh University, **whose** revolutionary theory of evolution was to shock many of his Victorian contemporaries.

D. Assignment 2 Linking sentences 2006-2007 Deadline (on FirstClass) 10th November

Link together the following pairs of sentences to make one sentence in any appropriate way. You can use conjunctions (coordinators and subordinators) or relative pronouns (who, which, whose). Try to use as many different linking words as possible. My notes on **Linking in the sentence** may help you. You will often need to adapt the sentence as well as adding the appropriate linking word.

1. The death penalty is still retained by over 100 states. It is considered by many to be a cruel and degrading form of punishment.
2. The management try to keep the number of staff to a minimum. Their aim is to sell their products at the lowest possible price.
3. The war resulted in a huge loss of life. It destroyed much of the country's cultural heritage.
4. Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman to fly in space in 1963. She disproved the American theory that "biological tensions" made it impossible for women to be astronauts.
5. Overseas students are entitled to a three-year residence permit. They must have proof that they are in full-time education.
6. Some people do not believe in the benefits of homeopathy. Others feel that it has an important role to play alongside traditional medicine.
7. Japan has a population of over 120 million. This means that on average there are 325 people per square kilometre.
8. The members of the Hutterian communities do not vote in general elections. They refuse to swear oaths of any kind.
9. The voting procedures were monitored by United Nations representatives. They were afraid that there might be attempts to intimidate voters.
10. The project was deprived of funding. It had to be abandoned.
11. The ambassadors received news of the military coup. They immediately ordered the evacuation of all non-essential personnel.
12. University fees have increased over the past few years. There have been no noticeable improvements in facilities.
13. The Italian director Federico Fellini died in 1993 at the age of 73. His most famous films include *La Dolce Vita*, *8 1/2*, and *Amarcord*.
14. As a child, Vita Sackville-West was a terrible bully. Other children would refuse any invitation to tea at her house.
15. Norrington House provides an excellent setting for these summer courses. It is surrounded by fifteen acres of fields and woodland.