

## Preface

Monika Bednarek, Lobke Ghesquière, Hilde Hasselgård,  
Martin Hilpert and J. Lachlan Mackenzie

The Editors are delighted to celebrate a significant milestone in the history of *Functions of Language*, 25 years of uninterrupted production, during which the journal has come to establish itself as a major organ of functional linguistics in the world. It is a great honour to have the backing of a distinguished Editorial Board, whose 35 international members represent the full range of today's linguistic functionalism. It is especially pleasing that the late M. A. K. Halliday, whose work occupies a central and unique place in our field, was our Honorary Editor, from the foundation of the journal. In Volume 25:2 we published a tribute to Halliday by one of the original editors of *Functions of Language*, Kristin Davidse, who celebrates his influence in functional linguistics and beyond. We would also like to express our gratitude to our partners at John Benjamins, who have been dependable and supportive throughout the years. Lastly, this is also a welcome occasion to thank all our authors, our reviewers, and, not least, our readers. Without all of these, the journal simply could not exist.

The first issue of Volume 1 appeared in 1994, with a foreword by M.A.K. Halliday, in which he sketches out the *raison d'être* of *Functions of Language*. He deplores how in much of the linguistics of that time, form was divorced from function, and welcomes the new journal as resisting that trend and drawing on the different emphases given to 'instance' and 'system' by Sapir and Whorf, Malinowski, the London School, and the Prague School. Halliday emphasizes how these "ongoingly relevant contributions" are having a lasting impact on contemporary functionalists. He sees the journal as showing potential to "create the future" and discerns certain trends that he anticipates as benefiting from the functional perspective: one is computational linguistics and natural language processing, including both text generation and parsing; another concerns practical applications in education, language pathology and forensic science, as well as other meaning-making systems and human semiosis in general; a final one is corpus linguistics, accommodating indeterminacy and offering a systematic account of language variation.

It was this broad vision that inspired the original team of Editors (Kristin Davidse, Dirk Noël and Anne-Marie Simon-Vandenberg) to approach their task with an open perspective on functional linguistics. As Halliday remarked in his preface, “functional grammars” do not constitute a homogeneous set; what they share is a conviction that language forms are constituted through systems and processes of meaning. The very first issue put that vision into practice, with an article on the corpus-based analysis of a syntactic construction in English, another on inter-clausal relationships in a Western Australian language, another by a leading cognitive linguist on possessives and topicality, and another taking a Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) perspective on language teaching. That issue continues with a review article on a major presentation of Simon Dik’s Functional Grammar (FG), and is rounded off by various reviews of books from the Prague School, from the American grammar-of-conversation tradition, from discourse analysis and from the computer modelling of text production, as well as some brief book notices. This first issue can be seen as a microcosm of what *Functions of Language* was to become, a journal remarkable for the breadth of its scope, the coverage of various theoretical approaches, and the study of many different languages. Indeed, this is clearly reflected in the current description of the journal’s mission to publish articles and reviews “from the full spectrum of functionalist linguistics, seeking to bring out the fundamental unity behind the various schools of thought, while stimulating discussion among functionalists”.

In the nineties, functional linguistics had to contend, as Halliday had hinted, with the academic dominance of generative grammar, which gave meaning short shrift and declared many of the journal’s central concerns to be matters of “mere performance”. It is not surprising, then, that some of the early volumes contain a number of polemics, with articles and response articles attacking and defending various aspects of functionalist accounts of language. Nevertheless, the bulk of the papers in the first ten volumes of the journal (with Bill McGregor replacing Dirk Noël as Editor in 1998) gave body to Halliday’s expectations, with – as he had predicted – ever more corpus-based descriptions of syntactic phenomena in various languages and a growing number of studies of specific aspects of the application of linguistics in first and second language acquisition. But the majority of papers were simply functionally imbued investigations of some aspect of a language or its use in communication. As the tenth year of the journal’s existence opened (in 2003), the new team of Editors (Lachlan Mackenzie, Geoff Thompson and Anne-Marie Simon-Vandenberg) could look back on “the journal’s policy of openness, publishing high-quality contributions from a wide range of functionally oriented linguists for whom a concern with meaning is primordial”.

It was in the eighth year of the journal’s existence (2000) that the first Special Issue (SI) was produced – on Interpersonal Grammar, also the topic of the 2018

SI. Including the present issue, twelve SIs have now appeared. One of the current Editors, Monika Bednarek, has fond memories of guest-editing the 2008 Special Issue on Evaluation in Text Types, working closely with our late colleague Geoff Thompson at an early stage in her career.

In reflecting in the articles and reviews it publishes many of the major concerns of functionalist work in recent decades – cognition, discourse, engagement, evidentiality, grounding, modality, stance – *Functions of Language* has helped to articulate the development of functional linguistics. Over the last fifteen years or so, the journal has also been welcoming work that overlaps in mutually enriching ways with central concerns of functionalism. This notably concerns historical linguistics in the form of grammaticalization and lexicalization studies, but also diachronic construction grammar, quantitative corpus linguistics, aspects of psycho- and neurolinguistics and usage-based work that brings functionalism closer to cognitive linguistics. The journal has also reflected the rise of new models, such as Functional Discourse Grammar, Role & Reference Grammar, Construction Grammar or the Natural Semantic Metalanguage, and the emergence of novel fields of interest such as gesture studies, multimodality and media studies, as well as trends in SFL towards the study of appraisal, genre or grammatical metaphor, including the particular contours of the Cardiff Grammar. Although the journal's major focus has been on clausal and textual structure, it has also branched into the study of intonation and given extensive coverage to lexis, whether or not seen from the SFL angle as most delicate grammar, and to discourse markers. This is not to say, however, that *Functions of Language* is lacking in focus: luckily, we receive very many more submissions than we can publish, and work that does not sufficiently qualify as functional linguistics is rejected, often with a recommendation towards a more suitable journal. We also encourage authors to reference and engage with alternative schools of thought in order to stimulate discussion among functionalists, in line with the journal's mission statement.

One of our saddest duties as Editors of a journal of functional linguistics is to mark the passing of great exponents of our discipline with invited obituaries. *Functions of Language* has published accounts of the lives of Basil Bernstein (7.2), Jan Firbas (7.2), Kenneth L. Pike (8.1), Bill Mann (13.2), John McHardie Sinclair (14.2), Robert de Beaugrande (16.1), Anna Siewierska (19.1) and Ruqaiya Hasan (22.3). Our sadness and shock were particularly acute when our fellow-Editor and dear friend Geoff Thompson suddenly passed away in 2015; his obituary appeared in Volume 23.1. The passing of our Honorary Editor, M. A. K. Halliday, in 2018 was marked by an obituary in Volume 25:1 and an extended tribute in Volume 25:2. We look back on the lives of our colleagues with gratitude and admiration.

The current editorial team consists of Lachlan Mackenzie (as of Volume 10), Martin Hilpert (as of Volume 21), and Monika Bednarek (as of Volume 24), the Reviews Editor Wendy Bowcher, who succeeds Hilde Hasselgård (Volumes 19–25),<sup>1</sup> and before her Christopher Butler and Jean-Christophe Verstraete, and the Managing Editor Lobke Ghesquière (since Volume 23), who succeeds Liesbeth Heyvaert and before her Miriam Taverniers.

The Editorial Team is particularly pleased that the 25th anniversary of *Functions of Language* is being celebrated with a Special Issue devoted to Margaret Berry. There is no doubt that her commitment to the furtherance of functional linguistics (and SFL, her own favoured approach, in particular) was a major impetus behind the foundation of our journal. Her investigations of the English clause and its embedding in text have been a constant source of inspiration for researchers in SFL, as is clear from the impressive line-up of scholars who have come together to honour her under the Guest Editorship of Lise Fontaine (Editorial Board member), Miriam Taverniers (for years our Managing Editor) and Kristin Davidse (one of our founding Editors). It also gives us great pleasure to read, in the introduction, the reminiscences of Anne-Marie Simon-Vandenberg, Editor for 20 years, whose imprint on the journal and its contents is unrivalled.

As should be clear from the preceding paragraphs, we are optimistic about the future of *Functions of Language*. The excellent article submissions and reviews that we receive from Early Career Researchers make us confident that there will be new generations taking over from us, and that there will be interesting ideas and observations that can give substance to the next quarter century of *Functions of Language*. We thus look forward to the coming years with excitement and anticipation.

---

1. See Volume 26 Issue 2 for a word of thanks to Hilde and of welcome to Wendy.