

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Overview**

This chapter discusses the methodology of the study. It adopts the descriptive analytical method based on Michael Halliday's framework of 'Systematic Functional Linguistics' (SFL).

The chapter also provides discussions on the study materials and the analysis procedures.

### **3.1 Study Methodology**

The present study applies descriptive and analytical method. The researcher adopts Michael Halliday's framework of 'Systematic Functional Linguistics' for discourse analysis.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a potent framework for describing and modeling language as a resource for making meaning and choices. This framework treats language beyond its formal structures and takes the context of culture and the context of situation in language use (Halliday 1985, 1994; Matthiessen, 1995; Martin & Rose, 2003). In SFL, the immediate goal of text analysis is to show why and how the text means what it does (Halliday 1971; Halliday, 1985; Martin, 1992; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

In SFL, a text is analyzed in four ways. They are as follows: Context, Semantics, Lexico-grammar, and Phonology, orthography (or graphology).

To begin with the context, context is classified as one of the central concerns, because it is integral to the overall process of making meaning.

In fact, when language occurs in a context, it will relate to or is linked to a number of contexts (Matthiessen & Halliday 1997). They are:

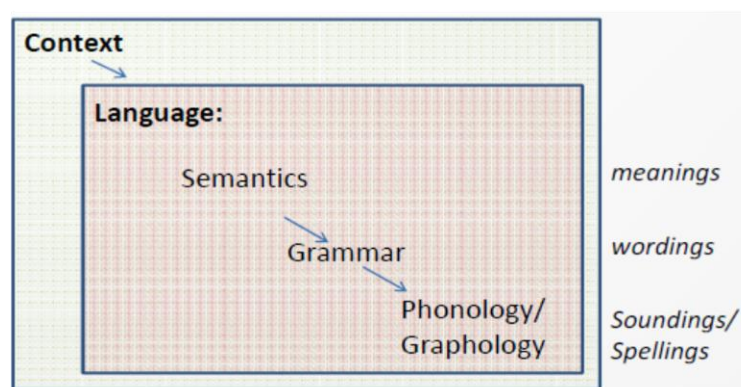
- ***The Context of Culture*** [genres].
- ***The Context of Situation*** [the technical term for this is Register].

Halliday models the context of situation, where the aspects of the context relate intimately to the language used to create text, in terms of three important strands (ibid): They are:

- ***Field***: gives us an indication of the topic or what is being talked about.
- ***Tenor***: gives us an indication of who is/are involved in the communication and the relationships between them.
- ***Mode***: gives us an indication of what part the language is playing in the interaction and what form it takes (written or spoken).

These three Register variables are used to explain people's intuitive understanding that individuals use different resources, different kinds and different parts from the system of language (Matthiessen & Halliday 1997).

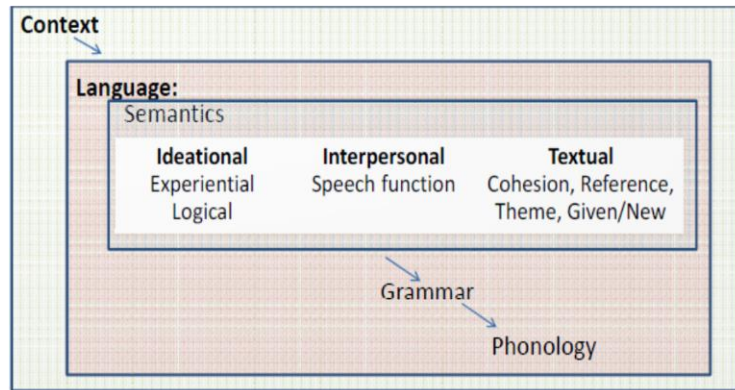
Inside the language itself, the SFL describes a model with three levels as a tristratal model of language (see figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1. Systemic Model of Language Strata**

Source: (O'Donnell, 2012).

1- *Discourse-Semantics* has three metafunctions. They are: Interpersonal metafunctions, Ideational metafunctions, and Textual metafunctions. (See figure 3.2).

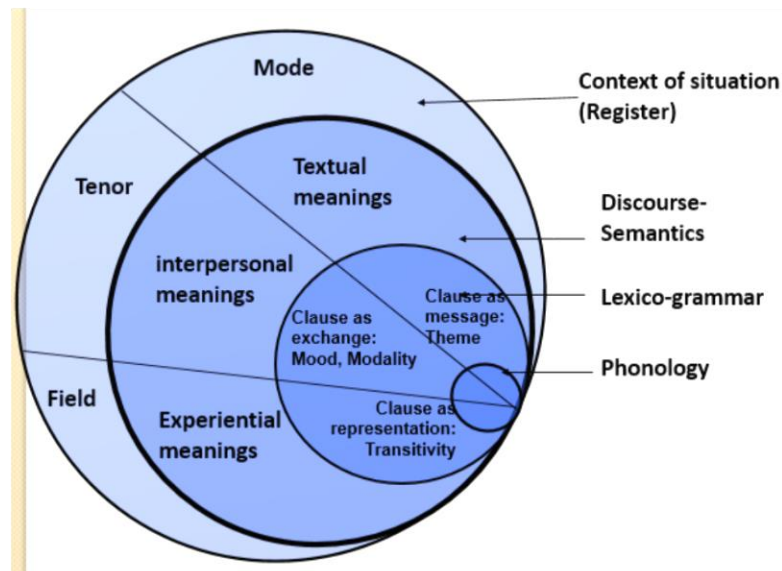


**Figure 3.2. The Levels of Discourse-Semantics**

Source: Source: (O'Donnell, 2012).

2- *Lexico-grammar* includes both grammar and vocabulary in one stratum and represents the view of language in both lexis and grammar.

3- *Phonology, orthography (or graphology)* which refers to the sound system, the writing system, and the wording system (Egins 2004, p.19).



**Figure 3.3. The (Sub)systems of Context of Situation, Discourse Semantics, and Lexico-grammar**

Source: (Halliday & Mattiassan, 2004).

Data from (figure 3.3) shows that SFL describes distinctive (sub)systems at both the level of lexico-grammar and the level of discourse semantics, which shapes the contextual variables in order to make the generalized meanings or metafunctions. Hence, the SFL model proposes that human language has evolved to make three generalized kinds of meanings; they are: Experiential/ideational meanings (clause as representation), Interpersonal meanings (clause as exchange), and Textual meanings (clause as message) (Egins 2004, p.58-59).

*1-The Experiential /or ideational meanings* are with the way reality is represented and the grammatical resources for construing our experience of the world around us, as to what is going on, who is involved in the going-on, and when, where, and how the goings-on are going on. One of its chief grammatical systems is classified as **Transitivity** (Matthiessen & Halliday, 1997). Transitivity includes a number of aspects:

*A-The processes* [in the verbal group]

*B-The participants* (human/non-human) who are participating in these processes [in the noun group].

*C-The circumstances* in which the processes occur and the when, where, and how they take place [in the prepositional phrase and adverbial group]. For instance: [*Circumstance*] *in the open glade* [*participant*] *the wild rabbits* [*Process*] *danced* [*circumstance*] *with their shadows* (ibid).

The presence and type of processes depend mainly on the participants involved, their number and type, as well as on the process itself. Halliday (1994) distinguishes six different types of processes as listed below and explained by Ezzina (2015, pp. 287-288) :

- **The Material Process** : this type of processes includes clauses of doing and happening. The two main participants associated with this process are: the Actor (the doer of the process) and the Goal (the entity affected by the process).

- **The Mental Process** : mental processes are grouped into four subtypes which are perception (see, hear, feel), cognition (know, understand, believe), affection (like, love), and desire (hope, want, wish).
- **The Relational Process** : the process type occurs outside and inside human being. Relational processes are typically realized by the verb 'be' or some verbs of the same class (known as copular verbs); for examples, seem, become, appear, etc., or sometime by verbs such as have, own, possess.
- **The Behavioral Process** : behavioral process lies between the material and mental processes. It characterizes the outer expression of inner working and reflects physiological and psychological behaviors. This type of process usually has one participant who is typically a conscious one, called the BEHAVIOR.
- **The verbal process** : between mental and relational processes are Verbal processes, which represent the act of saying. Usually three participants are involved in Verbal processes: the Sayer is responsible for verbal process; the Receiver is the person at whom the verbal process is directed; and the Verbiage is the nominalized statement of the verbal process.
- **The Existential Process** : between relational and material processes are existential processes which prove states of being, existing, and happening. Existential processes typically employ the verb *be* or its synonyms such as *exist*, *arise*, *occur*. The only participant in this process is Existent which follows the *there is/are* sequences.

**2-The interpersonal meanings** express ways of instituting relationships with others. They are concerned with the interaction between speaker(s) or writer(s) and addressee(s). It is used to establish the speaker's role in the

speech situation and relationship with others. One of its main grammatical systems is **Mood** and **Modality** (Matthiessen & Halliday 1997).

Mood has the value of showing the types of roles that speakers and hearers take in linguistic exchange (Simpson, 1993). Mood alternatives in English are declarative, interrogative, and imperative. Modality, on the other hand, refers broadly to a speaker's attitude towards, and opinion about, the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence. Modality facilitates the representation of probability, necessity, usuality, inclination, and certainty (ibid).

*3-The textual meanings* are concerned with the creation of text and the way we organize our meanings into the text that makes sense/cohesion. One of the main textual systems is *Theme* and *Rheme* (Matthiessen & Halliday, 1997). *Theme* refers to “the point of departure of the message” (Halliday 1994), the first grammatical element in the clause. The remainder of the message is the *Rheme*. A clause consists of a Theme + Rheme structure. *Given information* often serves as the *Theme* of the message and the remainder of the clause, the *Rheme*, often presents *new information*. For instance: [*Theme*] *in the open glade* [*Rheme*] *the wild rabbits danced with their shadows* (Matthiessen & Halliday, 1997).

The beginning of the English clause is fundamental because it shows the writer's point of departure for the clause and relates it to the rest of the text (Halliday 1994). A progression of Themes from one clause in a paragraph to the next clause in the following paragraph is anticipated (Schleppegrell, 2004).

Thematic development focuses on the use of topical and textual Themes. A topical Theme is where the experiential meaning of a clause is found. It is realized through premodification and postmodification of a noun group, adverbial group or prepositional phrase. A textual Theme

connects clauses, being responsible for the cohesive ties of a text. Textual Themes are realized through conjunctions or conjunctive adjuncts, functioning as structural elements (Matthiessen & Halliday, 1997).

### **3.2. Study Materials**

The materials of the current study consist of articles selected from two online newspapers written in English and published in different continents. They are the American newspaper, *The Washington Post* (WP), and the Saudi one, *Arab News* (AN). The choice of these two newspapers is motivated by the fact that they are both considered prominent newspapers with an extensive influence and a vast readership.

*The Washington Post* was established in 1877, and it is owned by the Washington Post Company. According to the Audit Bureau of Circulations, the newspaper has a weekly circulation of 1.5 million, making it the fifth largest newspaper in the United States (Graham, 1998). Therefore, it is considered one of the major newspapers in the USA. Graham (1998) says that it is " ... one of the country's most elite and influential newspapers", and the Encyclopedia of Media and Politics states explicitly that "The Washington Post is considered one of the most authoritative news sources on the activities of the U.S. government, particularly within Congress and the White House".

*Arab News* was first published by the Saudi Arabian Government in Riyadh as a weekly newspaper in 1975. It targets the English-speaking individuals in the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries and the Arab world. In 1986, its owner turned it into a daily newspaper (Yanuar, 2006). Nowadays, Arab News is considered one of the leading and best-selling

Middle Eastern newspapers in English and has become a credible source of information (Al-Khazen, 2010).

The sample articles were chosen from the online newspapers of *The Washington Post* and *Arab News*. The preference of online editions of the concerned newspapers is due to many features of online newspapers which distinguish them from the print ones, e.g. availability and accessibility (see Table 2.1).

The number of articles to be analyzed has been limited to eight articles from both newspapers, divided on an equal number basis to give four articles from each newspaper. The number is limited because the study examines and compares several aspects of language use which can be depicted from an exhaustive analysis of a limited number of newspaper articles. The analysis of just one aspect would entail the selection of a larger number of articles. This is highlighted in a few other studies (Al-Gublan, 2015 & Albakry, 2007).

The selection of these newspaper articles is based on some criteria: authenticity, locality, variation, and topic. Articles chosen are written by members of the communities concerned who write about topics dealing with local events. Another key characteristic of the sample articles is that they are written by different authors and printed in different sections of the newspaper. However, although they deal with different topics, each pair of articles from both newspapers deals with similar topics to maintain a consistent scale for comparison as highlighted in the following table:



**Table 3.1: List of Sample Newspaper Articles**

<b>Article NO.</b>	<b>Title/Author/ Publication date</b>	<b>The Washington Post</b>	<b>Arab News</b>
<b>1</b>	Title	Obama budget: Price tag for Wall Street bailout goes up	Saudi budget 2014 and economic performance
	Author	Yang, Jia Lynn Goldfarb,Zachary A.	Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg
	Publication date	February 13, 2012	December 29, 2013
<b>2</b>	Title	The recession's gender gap: from 'man-cession' to 'he-covery'	Unemployment and gender in Saudi Arabia
	Author	Suzy Khimm	Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg
	Publication date	September 6, 2011	May 12, 2013
<b>3</b>	Title	National Book Festival draws thousands to National Mall	21 nations take part in Riyadh International Book Fair
	Author	Luz Lazo	Ali Fayyaz
	Publication date	September 21,2013	March 5, 2014
<b>4</b>	Title	Suitland High School Football Coach Nick Lynch Dies in Car Accident	Saudi Soccer Star Al-Dossary Dies in Car Accident
	Author	Josh Barr	Mahmoud Ahmad
	Publication date	January 1, 2009	December 12, 2004

As shown in Table 3.1, the articles are classified into four pairs according to topic. This classification is as follows:

***Pair 1: Budget***

WP deals with 'Bailout cost' and how it increased. AN discusses the Saudi 2014 budget and compares it to budgets of previous years.

***Pair 2: Gender unemployment***

WP deals with the decline of men's job. AN discusses the changes of unemployment of men and women in Saudi Arabia.

***Pair 3: Book festival***

WP is about the book festival held in Washington. AN is about the book fair held in Riyadh.

***Pair 4: Death of a sportsman***

WP is about the death of a coach and AN is about the death of a football player.

The selection criteria is based on the assumption that the variation of articles will contribute to the analysis of different aspects of the text from a wider perspective, and thus more differences between the two newspapers articles may be revealed. Yet, the date of publication of each article, though mentioned in the table, is not taken as a criterion since articles with similar topics are not necessarily be written in the same period except when they relate to international news.

**3.3 Analysis Procedure**

The analysis will be carried out at three levels of meaning exploration dealing with Transitivity ( Process Types), Mood & Modality , and the Cohesive Devices. Respectively, they represent the ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning analysis.

As long as the aim of this analysis is to examine discourse features by comparing media texts written by native and non-native writers of English, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis will be applied.

In the qualitative approach, "qualitative forms of analysis offer a rich and detailed perspective on the data" (McEnery & Wilson, 1996, p.76). According to McEnery and Wilson (ibid.), "in qualitative research the data are used only as a basis for identifying and describing aspects of usage in the language and to provide "real-life" examples of particular phenomena". In fact, Bauer, Gaskell and Allum (2000) insist that for quantitative research to happen, qualitative research has to take place before.

In the quantitative research, the aim is to "classify features, count them and even construct more complex statistical models in an attempt to explain what is observed" (McEnery & Wilson, 1996, p.76). The advantages of quantitative research are that "results can be compared to others in the same manner as all scientific investigations that are based on data samples" (ibid.). Thus, for the current study, the qualitative is needed for the detailed analysis of the data whereas the quantitative is applied to give a statistical description of the data for the sake of comparing the pairs of articles.

### **3.4 Summary of the Chapter**

The discussion presented above explains the research design and its properties. It clarifies the conceptual ground of '*Systematic Functional Linguistics*' and points out its major features. It explains the methodology adopted for the analysis including discussion on the research materials and the analysis procedure. The discussion gives an idea of how and under what

conditions the "Discourse Features of Media Texts Written by Native and Non-native Writers of English" may be captured and studied.

The study combines two approaches for the analysis, the qualitative and the quantitative. The former is used for the detailed analysis of data and the latter for counting and comparing frequencies of features to be analyzed.

The following chapter will present the data and will attempt the analysis.