



Written Expression, SoSe 2025

This course should more realistically be called **Text Production**, as that is precisely what it deals with: the production of texts. The theoretical foundation of the course is **Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)**, as developed by M.A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan in collaboration with many other scholars; it is part of an autochthonous British school of linguistics that is sometimes referred to in German as *Britischer Kontextualismus*. Within the SFL tradition there is an approach that has come to be known as **genre-based literacy pedagogy**. I am critical of some of the theoretical shortcuts of this approach, but I acknowledge its stellar success rates in transforming underperforming junior secondary level students at socially disadvantaged schools into top university entrance examination performers.

The course will be conducted for the most part in **hybrid** mode; participants can either attend in person or follow the course virtually via meetings on MS Teams. This teaching mode is not without its difficulties, but it provides more flexibility for participants. During the first few weeks only, an asynchronous online participation would be possible, with students working through the materials at their own pace.

Meetings for the course will take place at the following time:

Wednesdays 10:15-11:45

We will meet in:

Building A2 2, Room 1.22 Sprachlabor

and/or

the MS Teams meeting that will appear in your MS Teams calendar.

Please make sure you are registered on LSF and try to keep in regular contact with me via email or other means.

The course materials include slides, reading exercises, and various worksheets. The worksheets are voluntary, and do not constitute part of the **portfolio** you have to produce in order to pass the course. But note that the content of each worksheet will typically become the subject of the discussion at some point during the following meeting, so it is advisable to at least look at each worksheet and think about it ...

This semester I plan to experiment with a variety of new in-class activities, including the use of ChatGPT. Students attending in person should have something to write with (pen, paper), or have a laptop or tablet with them if they prefer a paperless approach.

The course will be structured in a number of **blocks**:

The **first block** will involve exchanging contact details and making decisions about communication channels and frequency of contact.

The **second block** will involve becoming more familiar with the basic concepts of **Systemic Functional Linguistics** and **genre-based literacy pedagogy**. There are two parallel access routes here — there will be reading material, as well as slide shows. This block will also involve weekly exercise sheets — some of these will be questions on the reading material, others will involve analysing certain aspects of four short texts. During this part of the course, it would be theoretically possible for students to work at their own pace and in their own time, but by the end of the second block we will



definitely have fully transitioned to synchronous learning via face-to-face meetings in the classroom with simultaneous videoconferences on MS Teams for those unable to attend in person.

The **third block** will consist of four major tasks, such as writing (or rewriting or editing) texts belonging to four different genres. We will explore the conventions of each genre and look at the regions of English vocabulary and grammar that the genre in question tends to foreground. Your grades for these tasks will form the basis for your overall grade.

The **fourth block** will be the briefest, and will consist of general feedback. We will discuss grades, as well as arrangements for sending your results to the examinations office.

All materials will be made available here on the course website. If students express a strong preference for “having all the courses in one place on Moodle”, then I could set up an empty shell on Moodle which would simply point you to the course website. I must apologize for my laziness here—this is my 74th semester of teaching; I am now in fact in retirement; and students have still not yet made up their minds whether they prefer Moodle or MS Teams; and all of these different technologies require an enormous investment of time, a commodity which I no longer have. I will therefore continue my time-honoured practice of hand-coding both website and handouts in \TeX .

Plan for Summer Semester 2025:

Here you can find the plan for this semester's work:

<http://www.spence.saar.de/courses/writtenexpression/plan20251/index.pdf>

Materials for Week 01 (09.04.2025):

All the materials you need for Week 01 can be found in this directory:

http://spence.saar.de/courses/writtenexpression/unit01_20251

You might like to look at the contents of subdirectories B through I first, and download anything you haven't got yet. Subdirectory J contains screen recordings of me going through the contents for Week 01 and taking you through the slides (which are in subdirectory G as a PDF file, along with a printer-friendly PDF file that contains all the information from the slides formatted more economically). Due to an acute lack of time, I have had to use recordings that have been ‘recycled’ from previous semesters; I hope this causes no problems.

Subdirectory K contains some pictures of some of the people you will meet (virtually) in this course.

If there are any problems, just contact me.

Materials for Week 02 (16.04.2025):

All the materials you need for Week 02 can be found in this directory:

http://spence.saar.de/courses/writtenexpression/unit02_20251

Subdirectory A contains the questions on chapter 2 of the initial reading material – you already have the whole of the reading material, from last week. Chapter 2 is concerned with the functions of language.

Subdirectory B contains the slides for this week and a printout of their content. These slides complement the reading material, without however being perfectly aligned with it (either in terms of timing from week to week, or in terms of the concepts used).



Subdirectory C contains an extra handout – one page containing five crucially important paragraphs by Saussure in the original French; and another page containing the English translation of them, sitting next to a diagram that I would normally draw on the whiteboard at the beginning of every class, because it is the most important diagram of all.

In subdirectory D you will find some short screen recordings (recycled from previous semesters).

Materials for Week 03 (23.04.2025):

All the materials you need for Week 03 can be found in this directory:

http://spence.saar.de/courses/writtenexpression/unit03_20251

Subdirectory A contains the questions on chapter 3 of the initial reading material – you already have the link to the whole of the reading material itself, from the first week. Chapter 3 is concerned with register variation – with the relations between context of situation and the functional components of language.

Subdirectory B contains the slides for this week and a printout of their content. These slides complement the reading material, without however being perfectly aligned with it (either in terms of timing from week to week, or in terms of the concepts used).

Subdirectory C contains an extra handout – one page containing a classic example by Bronislaw Malinowski to demonstrate why you need to know about the context of situation if you want to understand the meaning of a text.

In subdirectory D you will find some short screen recordings in which I walk through the slide presentation.

Subdirectory E contains an exercise that I designed during the pandemic to replace what had previously been an interesting series of class discussions about Texts A, B, C, and D (see the handout from week 01 entitled “Some texts to think about”). The exercise is a multiple choice questionnaire with radio buttons (it is possible that you may not be able to see these buttons properly in your browser; you may need to download the file and view it with a PDF viewer – the Adobe Acrobat Reader is recommended).

Remember that you can theoretically work entirely at your own pace for the first four weeks. By Week 05 (7 May) you should, however, be in regular contact with me. If you complete all tasks by the specified dates, it will help me to assess your abilities more accurately and thus to design better materials that will address all of the issues.

Weeks 5 and 6 will be largely based on studying Texts A, B, C, and D.

If there are any problems, just contact me.

Materials for Week 04 (30.04.2024):

All the materials you need for Week 04 can be found in this directory:

http://spence.saar.de/courses/writtenexpression/unit04_20251

Subdirectory A contains the homework for week 5, which is based on Text C (*The Chamber of the House*).

Subdirectory B is where you can find the slides and a printout of their content.



Subdirectory C contains an additional handout, showing a diagram which might be too small to see on the normal printout: it comes from Halliday and Hasan (1976), *Cohesion in English*. I have also included a later version of the diagram.

Subdirectory D contains the screen recordings in which I go through the slides. This is of course not as good as a real class because you are not able to interrupt, but please feel free to contact me with any questions you have – by email or WhatsApp or whatever. (The slides are recycled from a previous semester.)

Remember that you can work entirely at your own pace for the first four weeks. By Week 05 (7 May) you should, however, be in regular contact with me. If you complete all tasks by the specified dates, it will help me to assess your abilities more accurately and thus to design better materials that will address all of the issues.

Weeks 5 and 6 will be largely based on studying Texts A, B, C, and D; by week 7 we will be planning the first of the four writing tasks, and in week 8 we will be discussing the results of the first writing task.

If you are working online, then by Week 5 it would be best if you could join the weekly MS Teams meetings.

If there are any problems, just contact me.

The materials for the rest of the course will be uploaded shortly.