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## Functionalism Paradigm in Second Language Writing: A Systematic Literature Review using Corpus-based Analysis

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### Abstract

This paper uses a corpus-based analysis systematic literature review to track the influence of functionalism paradigm in second language writing (SLW) over the last five years. The data were analyzed by using keywords and collocation analysis to map the closest association of functional paradigm to second language writing. It was then reviewed manually and thematized based on the research questions as the framework. Based on a corpus of 46 Scopus indexed journals ranges from 2017-2022 this study reveals that the influence of functionalism paradigm does not directly affect to SLW. Functional paradigm spawned the concept of context which then be interpreted and manifested into functional linguistic approach. Thus, studies on SLW revolves around the application of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to either teaching or assessing SLW. The elements of functionalism paradigm that affects to SLW are the basic assumption and the values of functional paradigm that perceived each variable in a text has a purpose. As an implication, second language writing composition using SFL focuses on text purpose and lexicogrammatical features. Functional linguists perceive language diversity in second language writing as functional, ensuring mutual intelligibility if communicative functions work effectively.

**Keywords:** Corpus-based analysis, functionalism paradigm, functional linguistics, second language writing, systematic literature review

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## 1. Introduction

Functionalism has significantly impacted social knowledge since its appearance in the 19th century. The first figures who succeeded in formulating the concept of functionalism were August Comte, Emile Durkheim, and Herbert Spencer. Auguste Comte is a philosopher from France, while Emile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer are philosophers from England. From that moment, functionalism was known to have two streams, namely French functionalism, and English functionalism (Thomas, 2019). Until recently, functionalism remains an interesting discussion, not only in linguistics but also in applied linguistics research areas (Ormerod, 2020). In other words, instead of being left, functionalism increasingly shows its potential to remain sustainable. Malinowski initiated the potential functionalism as the main philosophy in linguistics. This is evidenced by Malinowski's inheritance of context to Firth and Halliday. More specifically, Halliday postulates a theory of functional systemic linguistics. This theory has also become famous because of flexibility and accuracy in describing language (Hu & Khan, 2022). The term of describing language itself is interpreted diversely by many linguists. Some scholars used SFL as the basis for evaluating translations quality (Suryaningtyas, et.al, 2019); discourse analysis and register (Martin & White, 2003; Matthiesen et al. 2019, language learning (Jou, 2019); and second language writing (Hyland, 2014).

Although the potential and empirical evidence of functionalism to analyse the phenomenon of second language writing is very high (Atkinson, 2010; Hyland, 2021; Hyland, 2004), limited studies discussing the philosophical basis of functionalism and its influence on second language writing. Atkinson (2018) has already touched on the influence of functionalism in second-language writing, but it has not provided a sufficiently detailed explanation. In that paper, Atkinson only describes some theories and paradigms that influence second-language writing. The needs of grounding the discussion into conceptual and philosophical bases is due to responding current issues in linguistics, especially those of undertaking second language writings. For example, Hyland & Jiang (2021) found that the trend of second language writing as represented through SSCI bibliometric study tend to reach the issues about identity, interaction, and genre. To explain this phenomenon, the perspectives of formalism (Thomas, 2019) which believes that language description is close to correct and incorrect is no longer relevant. The philosophical foundation of functionalism, to some extent, contribute to interpret and explain the relations of functional linguistics to the diverse English use in second language writing. To explain the functionalism paradigm and its influence on functional linguistics and second language writing, it is necessary to have a detailed explanation of Malinowski's line of thought, leading to Firth and Halliday and ending with Hyland. Previous literature studies have not provided concrete examples of functionalism paradigm analysis in second-language writing. Most papers separate theoretical studies and practical studies of the influence of functionalism in second-language writing. Even if these two things can be combined to provide a comprehensive analysis,

especially for new researchers in second language writing. To derive the influence of functionalism paradigm to second language writing, this study aims to provide systematic literature review that show the related variables of functionalism paradigm and the extent research method that has been commonly used by worldwide scholars. Subsequently, this study interprets the results by delivering the philosophical foundation of functionalism paradigm, especially which elements of functionalism paradigm that affects or is embedded to second language writing. As a result, this paper aims to answer three questions as follows. They are on how the functionalism paradigm is applied to second-language writing, and what implications can be rendered from functionalism paradigm to second language writing compositions and language varieties in second language writing. This study is expected to shed a light in supporting English teachers and linguists who sustainably researching and applying functionalism paradigm in their academic interest. This study can act as a promoting object of functionalism paradigm for those of English teachers and language practitioners who does not uphold certain language philosophy to direct their academic works.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1. The short history of functional paradigm***

According to Ahimsa-Putra, a paradigm is a set of logically interconnected concepts that serve to understand, interpret, and explain the reality or problem at hand. As mentioned earlier, Ahimsa-Putra (2009) offers elements in the paradigm. Some of these elements can be identified explicitly, and some are not. These elements include basic assumptions, values, models, problems investigated, concepts, research models, analytical models, results of analysis, and ethnography. Here is a visualization of the elements included in the paradigm. Referring to Ormerod (2020), the basic assumptions of functionalism paradigm is inseparable from the history of functionalism itself. Auguste Comte proposed the theory of functionalism along with sociology in the 19th century after the French Revolution. The science of sociology at that time was raised to justify those social sciences were as prestigious or even more prestigious than natural sciences. Reflecting on biology, which was first famous for studying individual organisms, sociology believes that every society consists of a set of organisms called community organisms. From this understanding, Auguste Comte brought the concept that every organism of society must have or be given a function to form a stable society. After that, these functions must also be carried out jointly and continuously. Separately in England, biological sciences were also popular. Along with these developments, the famous analogy of society is the organismic analogy. This analogy believes that living things on Earth are assembled from a set of organs. Therefore, the thinking that developed was structuralist at that time. Any components that make up the organ device are essential to learn. Herbert Spencer sought to transform organismic analogies into explicit models of functional analysis. Organismic analogies still influence Spencer's structural functionalism. However, in the context of sociology, Spencer considers society as

a biological organism that consists of interdependent organs; the dependence is the result or consequence so which the organism can survive. That is, analyzing organs alone is not enough. These organs, to work correctly, need to have and carry out functions. Thus, the basic assumption of functionalism is all structures that exist particularly in an organization or an institution within society should be treated as functional and should serve a purpose for the sake of social stability. To this extent, the value of functionalism is a mutual understanding of other people's norms, values, and behaviors due to it is part of social orders, and it depends on the context of each social order.

In its development, functionalism was brought from biology to sociology. It was used by many social scientists to study other social dimensions (see. Malinowski, 1939). This development cannot be separated from the role of Malinowski (1884-1942). Malinowski's most significant contribution was that he answered the question of how functionalism could explain how to determine the function of an organ or elemental unit. They found that we would be better able to study and determine the function of an organ with the observation process. In development, Malinowski found that, in addition to observation, functionalism also thinks about other dimensions, namely meaning and context. Considering these two things, collecting observations that have been made easier to interpret is necessary. During the observation process in Australia, Malinowski revealed that the functions of people's organisms can also be very different in different contexts. Moreover, in different contexts, community organisms have various meanings for the functions of each community organism. Kinship systems can be strong or weak depending on the meaning in a particular context. This emphasis on context has made the functionalism paradigm popular in Europe.

In this case, functionalism cannot be separated from formalism. The aspect of context presented by functionalism nevertheless refers to the form formalism believes in representing human thought and action. Thomas (2019) asserts that formalists typically look inward to explain linguistic phenomena. In some cases, they explain newly observed language facts according to how they fit into established formal linguistic facts. In the case of lanes, formalists look inward to explain facts and forms according to their status in language change or acquisition. On the other hand, Functionalists prioritize language data and value detailed, contextual records of their use. They typically look for explanations outside of language while assuming the language is what it is. It is because of the urgency of human communication and cognition or the external cultural environment in which language is being used. For functionalists, the main task is to define how the form of language data because it is related to communicative purpose and human cognitive resources.

To understand the function of communication, instead of focusing on form, functionalists believe that context has a significant role. The concept of context was born from Malinowski when he conducted research in Papua New Guinea and the Melanesian Region (Siedin, 2021). At that time, Malinowski attempted to translate the primitive languages of Papua New

Guinea and Melanesia word-for-word. He translated from these languages through the equivalent of an English dictionary. However, as it turns out, comparisons with English dictionaries not only fail but are an indication of a misconception of meaning. From this, Malinowski thought that language comparisons could not have the same meaning. He believed that every word had its meaning. Thus, Malinowski's translation of a series of English words at first sounded vague until Malinowski explained the context to native speakers of Melanesian languages (Ormerod, 2020). For example, when Malinowski searches for the word 'wood' in Melanesian languages, the equivalent is 'wood' in English. It turns out that, after explaining the context, in the Melanesian language, 'wood' means canoe that the prominent sailors who looked back and saw their companions left behind on the arms of the Pilolu sea, and further the fact that illustrates the cultural significance of the seafarers' activities. Thus, focusing on form alone is not enough. Context has a vital role (Thomas, 2019).

## ***2.2. The study of context in functional paradigm***

In development, these values about context were developed by J.R. Firth and continued by his student, Michael Halliday, from the University of London. The functionalism paradigm was developed into Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory. Systemic functional linguistics (SFL), developed by Halliday (1978), is a theory of language and methodology for analysing texts and the context in which they are used. Because of its dual nature, SFL aims to explain how individuals use language and how language is structured for different uses (Eggins, 2004). By adopting a multifunctional view of language, the language due to achieve a specific social function, SFL divides the meanings embodied by language into three types: 'ideational', 'interpersonal,' and 'textual' meanings.

According to Halliday (2014), ideational meaning relates to how language is used to represent our experiences physically, psychologically, and socially. These meanings are realized through a 'transitivity system', which is represented by process (realized by verbal groups), participating participants (realized by nominal groups), and circumstance (usually realized by adverb groups). Whereas 'interpersonal' meaning is embodied by 'mood systems' and 'modalities'. Moods are related to the exchange of information, goods, and services. On the other hand, Modality is the relationship established between the author of the text and his representation carried out by its author in terms of the truth and needs of the text statement. Matthiessen (2019) adds that language has an interpersonal function and is used to encode interactions and to show how a person can maintain the various propositions he believes in. In short, the proposition can be about arguments, plans, suggestions, or things. Thus, interpersonal meaning allows coding the meaning of attitudes, interactions and relationships that embody the tenor of discourse, which is usually represented by vocabulary related to taste (feels, thinks, good, bad, and so on) and related modalities (may, will, should, and so on). Halliday (2014) added that textual meaning is concerned with the function of language

to realize how the text is arranged concerning its context and message. Clauses, seen as messages, project textual meaning through the system. Theme/rhyme, which is related to the departure point of the message (theme) and continuity (rhyme), is in the syntactic organization of clauses. Textual analysis based on a systemic-functional approach shows micro-textual evidence of specific social practices, allowing discourse analysts, among other things, to uncover the hidden interests of authors/speakers and their texts (Halliday, 2014; Halliday, 1978).

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Data Collections**

This study follows the framework of a systematic literature review for social science by Petticrew & Roberts (2005) by using the corpus. The framework includes several procedures. First, a description of the relevance or appropriateness of studies assembled for assessing the hypothesis to be tested. This study proposed a hypothesis that functional linguistics affects the practices of second-language writing. Thus, I compiled 50 abstracts of research articles. Second, I identified journals that published articles related to functional linguistics and second language writing from 2017-2022 by inputting ‘second language writing’ and ‘functional linguistics’ in the Scopus database searching query. The journals were indexed in Scopus. I excluded Web of Science indexing to strengthen the hypothesis so that I could include more related journals from non-native English-speaking countries. Thus, the journals that were included in this study were the *Journal of Second Language Writing*, the *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, and the *Journal of Asia TEFL*. After determining which prestigious publications published the most second language writing studies, I reduced the sources of potential papers to 46 articles considering the abstracts included the term *functional linguistics* and *second language writing* as the variable of the research. The articles were then built as a corpus. I used SketchEngine as both the storage and the analytical tools. There are 6526 tokens and 5722 words in the corpus.

#### **3.2. Data Analysis**

Subsequently, I did data analysis by referring to Hyland and Jiang (2021) and Lei and Liu (2019). I annotated the corpus of abstracts by doing keyword analysis to find the most popular research topic related to functional linguistics in second-language writing. Subsequently, I did a word-sketch analysis to see the nouns that collocated with the keywords. I then created a codebook with emergent thematic codes tagged all the included pieces with these themes and used the research question as a framework for our analysis. This allowed me to categorize significant findings from each study concerning the research topic. After the findings were identified, they are presented in the section that follows.

#### 4. Finding and Discussion

##### 4.1. *The influence of functionalism paradigm on second language writing*

The forty-six articles shared a similar pattern that portrays the influence of functionalism paradigm to second-language writing. All articles tend to directly refer to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as the approach to second language writing studies. None of the articles skipped the notion of SFL. Below is the table that shows the top twenty keyword analysis:

*Table 1. Keywords of functional linguistics to second language writing*

No	Keywords	Frequency per million
1	SFL	0,19
2	L2	2,24
3	Genre-based	0,03
4	Lexicogrammatical	<0,01
5	Metafunctions	<0,01
6	Argumentative	1,00
7	Meaning-making	0,14
8	EFL	0,91
9	Linguistics	3,68
10	Prepositional	0,21
11	CLIL	0,08
12	Lexical	1,32
13	Native-speaker	0,03
14	Ideational	0,09
15	Corpus	5,48
16	Multimodal	1,22
17	Bilingual	3,90
18	Textual	3,25
19	Multilingual	1,85
20	TESOL	0,45

Table 1 provides ten popular variables that represent the research area of functional linguistics in second-language writing. The table shows that the topics included the actors, the instructions, and the language description of second-language writing. In terms of the actors, the notion of non-native English-speaking writers in the third row dominated the context of second-language writing research that employs a functional linguistic approach. This can be the limitation of this study since the *Journal of Second Language Writing* contributes dominantly in the database, the notion of L2 is the dominant actor. However,

although the other two journals did not specify their studies on second language writing, the L2 notion remains dominant. In terms of instructions, *genre-based* is the most popular topic. Until recently, *genre-based* is believed to be the closest representation of functional linguistics. The last one is language descriptions. Several variables are found related to second language writing and functional linguistics. Each variable has significant correlations, for example, lexicogrammar as the smallest textual unit determines the metafunctions of the texts. The following language description is in the discourse stage, such as metafunctions, meaning-making, argumentative, and ideational. To extend the discussion of how far the influence of functional linguistics on second-language writing, I did a collocation analysis for each word in Table 1. By referring to the collocation strength score (Ngram length is +1, logDice >7) below is the micro research area in second language writing that applied a functional linguistic approach. Unfortunately, I must delete two words from Table 1 because the Ngram length of +1 is unavailable.

Table 2. Words associated to functional linguistics in second language writing

<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Collocates</b>	<b>logDice</b>
<b>Genre-based</b>	Pedagogy	13.2
	Approach	12.6
	Writing	9.3
<b>L2</b>	Writing	11.8
	Writers	11.4
	Writing assessment	10.6
	Writing research	10.6
	Writing task	10.1
<b>Lexicogrammatical</b>	Feature	12.7
	Function	12.2
	Choices	11.4
<b>Metafunctions</b>	logical	13.2
	Particular	12.4
	Interpersonal	11.5
<b>Meaning-making</b>	Choices	11.8
<b>Argumentative</b>	Texts	12.5
	Writing	11.4
Lexical	bundles	10.9

#### 4.2. Functionalism in Second Language Writing

The environment in SFL theory sees language as a particular text, and the text here does not always have to be written. The text is further seen as not only a grammatical unit, but also a useful and functional tool of communication. Halliday (1978, 2014) mentions that a new language can be understood if it relates to the environment and its usefulness. Text can be in



any linguistic form (Martin & White, 2003). The part of the text is the context of the situation, while the language environment is seen as a system. Then, the lexical item and grammatical category are cultural contexts. In writing a second language, several values need to be considered. Hyland (2019) provides three functionalism values in second-language writing. First is the function of the text, second is the content, and third is the genre or context of the writing. The following describes the definition and examples of functionalist values in second-language writing. Although writing a second language requires an understanding of grammar and proper vocabulary, in the context of writing English as a second language, writing is not only about these things. In other words, more than focusing on form alone is required. The vocabulary function helps to choose which patterns to write and how they can be used appropriately.

Functionalism in second-language writing means connecting structure with meaning. Specific forms of language have certain communicative functions. Thus, second language writers can learn the functions most relevant to their needs. Martin, et.al (2019) explain that with a functional paradigm, a second-language writer does not necessarily have to learn and use all second-language vocabulary to write. With sufficient vocabulary (no less), a second language writer can already write with good grammar and the proper context. Language writing is usually oriented to the structure only, introduction-content-conclusion and specific organizational patterns such as narrative, description, and exposition are explained and taught. At the same time, that should be a discourse organized according to the general function of written English. For instance, when we write narrative text, our vocabulary functions will be very different than if we write description text. Understanding the context of writing and the functions of each vocabulary will make the composition of ideas more precise. With the functionalism paradigm, second language writers can develop an outline into an essay or imitate parallel text patterns in their essays. Thus, in writing a second language, if we apply the paradigm of functionalism, then the understanding of vocabulary should not only be about recognizing vocabulary at the level of meaning but at the level of the context in which it is used as well.

#### ***4.3. The implications of second language writing compositions***

With regards to second-language writing composition, this part argues that a theme or topic is the main variable of composing second-language writers. There are some reasons that underlie the highlight of topics and themes as the key to second language writing. It is because the topic or theme serves as the context of thinking of second language writers (Martin & White, 2003; Hyland, 2021). Supposed that the topic and theme of the writing are not interesting nor understandable for the second language writer, it will be challenging for the second language writer to produce relevant texts. The more familiar the topic and theme of a text, the easier it is for second-language writers to recall their knowledge and produce

related texts (Mauranen, et.al., 2016; Hyland & Jiang, 2021). Therefore, second language writing emphasizes the importance of the commonness of the second language writer to the topic and theme to be written. In the perspective of second language teaching, the teachers are suggested to provide familiar topics and themes to their students, especially in the writing assessment. Second language writing emphasizes the importance of second language writers to ensure that they write what they already know, what they already understand, not what they have never learned at all (Hyland, 2004; Hyland, 2019).

This is because themes and topics often form a person's thinking context. With the commonness of the topic and theme of the writing, the author can include personal reflections on an event. Second-language writing will more easily explain why the topic is important and exciting to write about. They will be able to explore information about the place, time, and social location of the topic or theme to be written. Second-language writers will also be able to engage personally about the topic. They can better feel, react, and respond to topics or themes they are familiar with. Furthermore, the second-language writer will find it easier to arrange the order of events that will be written. Additionally, to know the importance of recognizing the topic to be written as the context of the situation, second-language writers also need to be given or choose a topic following their second-language competence (Hyland, 2004; Hyland, 2019). After being familiar with the topic and theme, second-language learners must recognize rhetorical patterns in composing a writing. This rhetorical pattern can be in terms of the structure and meaning of lexical collocations or collections of collocations that show the writer's line of thinking in conveying his ideas by the given topic or theme.

Second-language writers are also expected to continue practicing these rhetorical patterns through exercises. Second-language writers need to recognize and study rhetorical patterns, which may be helpful to second-language writers as a framework for expressing their ideas and developing an awareness of the function of each collocation in a discourse. For example, if the author of a second language, it is easier to understand the structure and meaning of lexical collocation.

#### ***4.4. The Implications for language varieties in second-language writing***

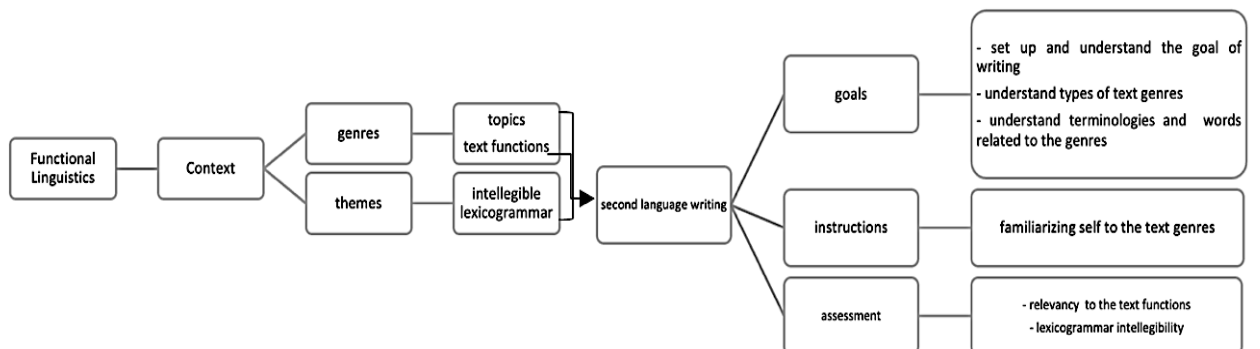
With the development of publishing second-language writing, the phenomenon of language varieties is unavoidable. Abah (2020) found that “the function of the non-standard language dialects is chiefly interactive. What matters is for a variety to be intelligible to those using it.”. This finding is relevant to the concept of English as an academic lingua franca (Mauranen, et.al., 2016). Under the perspective of functionalism, Martin (2016) proposed the idea of *genre* in second-language writing as a gradual, goal-oriented social process. Genre is a social process that occurs because cultural actors interact with each other to achieve what they want. Humans are portrayed as goal-oriented beings, and they evolved to achieve something. In the perspective of second language writing, writers usually must take more than one step to achieve their goals. By establishing stages or steps, second language writers

can choose explicit and implicit grammatical linguistic choices to produce text that seems well-composed and appropriate for the readers. To this extent, the idea of intelligible writing matters. Functionalism does not, in this case, support slipshod English. Instead, it encourages second-language writers to attempt to produce understandable English.

Second-language writers with a *genre* orientation will not solely look at the subject's content. Contrariwise, they will also carry out the process of composing and writing textual forms to show the writing as an effort to communicate with the reader (Abah, 2020; Mauranen, et.al., 2016). The premise is that second language writers do not just write, but they write something to achieve a goal. Some examples of goals are getting things done, telling stories, asking for overdrafts, creating love letters, explaining technical processes, and much more. Second-language writers can follow certain social conventions to organize messages because they have a reader-oriented perspective. They want readers to recognize our purpose. The concept of a socially recognized way of using language for a specific purpose is called *genre*.

In second-language writing, linguistic patterns point to contexts beyond the page, implying a series of social constraints and choices that operate on writers in specific contexts. Writers are seen as having certain goals and purposes, certain relationships with their readers, and specific information to convey, and the form of the text is the resource used to achieve such matters. In short, the importance of genre orientation is that second language writers are not only concerned with structure, function, or process but also incorporate discourse and contextual aspects of language use that are usually overlooked. Second-language writers can not only write for the needs of their readers. However, they can also draw writers into a deeper understanding that the text they write functions as a means of communication. Below is the illustration of the possible influence of functional linguistics to second language writing.

Figure 1. The influence of functionalism to academic writing



## 5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the discussion above, it can be concluded that the philosophical foundation of the functionalism paradigm includes the fundamental assumption that every aspect of a language has functions that can be identified through the context. The manifestation of context itself is in the form of text functions/genres and topics of texts. By referring to the importance of context as the main variable of second language writing, both second language writers and assessors; it can be teachers or journal editors, can be more open to the idea of language diversity if the writing promotes intelligibility. This study is somewhat limited to small range of publication timeline and used simple corpus-based analysis systematic literature review. Further studies are suggested to have wider publication timeline and bigger data size to search not only the influence of functional paradigm but also to search for current issues in second language writing.

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