

Synopsis of MA Dissertation

This dissertation forms the whole of the work for assessment in the award of the MA. The objective of the course of study was to investigate the nature of grammar in language when analysed on the basis of components. To do this the components of grammar first had to be identified and classified by type. While the first three (Action, Instigator, Recipient) are well documented in various forms by many authors, the last two (Deixis and Connectivity) were less obvious. These components had to be tested against real language structures to ensure that they provided a complete and useful set.

With this working set of components, it became clear that they could be found in general communication and not just language. It was necessary to produce both a communication model for the components, and a semiotic model linking the components with established language models. The question of the Chomskyan language model also had to be addressed, as it places language outside of general communication. It was necessary to reintegrate it, and for this purpose the symbolic nature of words was used as a bridge between the simple grammar of components and the complex grammar created by language.

Finally, it became clear that the pictorial structure of a model affects its apprehension both structurally (what it consists of) and processively (how it works). It became necessary to review all models in this light, and to raise caveats about the modelling process. However, several useful, unexpected relationships came out of this review.

This MA required information to be gathered not just from areas of Linguistics study but also the areas of Anthropology and Zoology. Philosophy, especially the philosophy of communication, also had to be reviewed. This required extensive reading, and several Linguistics courses were undertaken to provide inspiration and new directions of study.