

Message from the Editor

The SFL community has been saddened by the loss of Professor Michael Halliday. The ASFLA committee thought that it might be a nice idea to create a newsletter that includes all of the tributes to Michael from the sysfunc mail list, the ASFLA website and elsewhere. Also, some people have sent us their memories which are also included here for the community to share. We have also included some lovely photos that people may enjoy seeing again. We apologise for repeating any tributes that you may have already read. We hope that these memories will show the extent to which Michael was treasured by so many people in the community and how he will always be fondly remembered. We thank all the people in the community who have shared their thoughts and condolences. We acknowledge those who collected these tributes online including Helen Caple, Penny Wheeler and Michele Zappavigna.

As you will see, the tributes share a common theme: that Michael was not only a brilliant genius but also a kind and humble person whose friendship was treasured by those lucky enough to have been in his circle. Despite his passing, he has left behind a strong and vibrant legacy throughout the world. If you know someone who might like to read these tributes, please feel free to share this newsletter with them.

Trish Weekes (editor) on behalf of the ASFLA Executive Committee



In this issue

- Tributes to Professor Michael Halliday
- ASFLA conference September 2018

Please let us know if you have any news that should appear on these pages or if you have any ideas about what you'd like to see:
asflaneews@gmail.com

Trish Weekes, Editor

Tributes to Michael Halliday

Obituary for Michael Halliday from ASFLA

M.A.K. Halliday, born 13 April 1925, died 15 April 2018

It is with great sadness that we heard the news of Michael Halliday's death. He is, and will remain, one of the great linguists the world has known and he has left behind a huge legacy. For so many of us in the systemic functional linguistic community, he has been our inspiring guide and a continual source of wisdom about language and how it works to make meaning within and across all aspects of life.

His influence on linguistics through his systemic functional model of language has been extensive and revolutionary. There are now scholars and researchers across an ever-increasing range of languages from all parts of the world who have drawn on his theory to address issues in a number of areas including educational linguistics, child language development, stylistics, computational linguistics, forensic linguistics and medical discourse to name a few. His work, steeped as it is in the social, provided the basis for shifting away from nativist descriptions of language. In downplaying the difference between the theoretical and applied domains, even saying that his approach 'leant towards the applied rather than the pure', he has inspired so many of us to take up his belief that linguistics 'cannot be other than an ideologically committed form of social action.'

We remember Michael for his prodigious intellect. He had the most extraordinary, analytical mind and could see things that we could only come to understand through reading his many books and articles, through his dazzling and captivating presentations at conferences, through his university lectures, and if we were lucky enough, through conversations with him. We can only now reflect with a sense of wonder and appreciation of the brilliant, insightful mind of a genius who provided us with deep insights into language and who had the capacity to make this so clear to us.



lectures, and if we were lucky enough, through conversations with him. We can only now reflect with a sense of wonder and appreciation of the brilliant, insightful mind of a genius who provided us with deep insights into language and who had the capacity to make this

so clear to us. These were his great gifts.

We also remember a wholly decent and wonderful human being, who modelled for us a way of being in the world. He was a gentle man, who carried no hubris, who showed that we could argue with passion and great intensity but do so with compassion and respect. He not only inspired us with his unyielding energy and will to improve the human condition, but demonstrated by his own actions how to go about that with dignity and civility. We remember the respect and curiosity he accorded all of us, whenever we engaged with him in conversation.

He meant so much to so many of us it is difficult to put in words our immense gratitude for all that he has given us. We can only try to express our deep appreciation for a life well lived, a life that made such a difference to so many other lives and whose great legacy will continue to frame how we think about language and its role in shaping the human condition.

We express our deepest sympathy to his family, friends and colleagues. We are thankful for a life lived fully and are comforted in the knowledge that his work will continue to inspire people all around the world.

Brian Dare, ASFLA President, on behalf of the ASFLA Committee

Tributes to Michael Halliday



Photo: Lexie Don

Hi all,

Many thanks for all the message, including many personal messages to David and me, and apologies for not responding to you all.

Both David and I feel very at peace about Michael's death - we think it has been much harder on his friends who have been at a distance.

Michael loved every single message that was sent to him (please be assured that all the messages that came to David and me were faithfully delivered, albeit some of the longer ones towards the end were given in summary form).

And he loved the many visitors he had over his last few months. A big special thanks are due to Rob Spence, who really spent a lot of time with him over the weeks leading up to his death. I know the family greatly appreciated Rob being there - among other things, it meant Neil and Shaye could get away on a holiday booked a long time back.

Kristin Davidse had a couple of extended visits too, at quite an important time for Michael. But many others spent time with him also.

Annabelle Lukin

I am one of many, many fortunate linguists who have been profoundly influenced by Professor Halliday. I still remember how inspired I was while I was reading his Introduction to Functional Grammar (2nd edition) late at night during my PhD time.

Since then his work has been the guiding light in all my research projects on language, translation and education.

I also learned a lot from him what it means to be a humble scholar, kind teacher and dear friend at the same time. I will cherish his legacy and every single small talk I had with him until my time comes. Thank you, Michael.

Mira Kim

Tributes to Michael Halliday

In 1978-9, Michael Halliday was one of the three examiners of my PhD, "A Computer-assisted Study of Lexical Collocations in the Old English Poems Beowulf and Andreas". This topic had led me to the study of J.R. Firth's work on collocation and to the general background of Prague School linguistics. Michael brought his highly relevant expertise (other examiners were from the United States) to the examination and was characteristically generous in his comments.

Terry Threadgold and I began teaching what would become SFL within the English Department at Sydney University, using what textbooks we could find (for example, Margaret Berry's *Introduction to Systemic Linguistics: I Structures and Systems*, published in 1975). When having lunch at the Footbridge Theatre café, we would often see Michael Halliday sitting by himself at a table overlooking busy Parramatta Road, writing in pencil in a notebook, looking up, looking down and writing again. Others talk about the handwritten sheets that were given out in class - all of this fed into the 1985 publication of the first edition of *Introduction to Functional Grammar*. Now we had the textbook we wanted - but without an index! The welcome (indexed!) second edition arrived in 1994. By then, Terry had left Sydney; I continued SFL teaching within various English units, including the study of poetry (Halliday's *A Course in Spoken English: Intonation*, published in 1970, was much used).

Poetry was to be my personal relation with Michael in the latter years. Michael liked to hear poetry spoken and enjoyed hearing the work of others and reading his own "verses" - speaking the rhythm of the trains he also loved. Thank you to his family for publishing his *Branch Line Ballads* (by "Alex Kirkwood") in time for Michael to see them.

Rosemary Huisman

I am deeply saddened by this news. Halliday's teachings have changed my view of the world and opened me many doors to different ones. I'll be always grateful for that. My condolences to his family on their loss.

Erisana Victoriano



My deepest condolences to Michael's family on their loss.

Like others you have heard from, I was introduced to Michael's work through Michael Gregory, whose English department at Glendon College I joined in 1968, and, like the others, learned Scale-and-Category by teaching undergrads what I had read the day before.

I met Michael Halliday for the first time in the Glendon common room sometime around 1970. He must have given a talk on child language, because I can remember asking dumb questions on that subject. I remember him being very patient with me.

Of course he became the dominant figure in my professional life. He has always seemed to me the most brilliant person I have ever met, quite apart from his modesty and abundant kindness. Knowing him and working with his ideas has been one of the great privileges of my life.

Michael Cummings

Tributes to Michael Halliday

Remembering Professor Michael Halliday

His life's work shaped modern linguistics, inspired the field of multimodality, and helped us all understand meaning.

I remember Michael attending a conference presentation I made in Sydney in 2008. It was early days of my research and the findings were thin. I felt dismal after the session but Michael spoke to me and encouraged me. His kindness, humility, and generosity to a young scholar left an indelible mark on me.

When I met Michael again in Beijing in 2015, where we celebrated his 90th birthday, he told me about an offer he had in the very early days to work with the Singapore Ministry of Education. It did not materialise eventually but how remarkable for Singapore it would have been if it had!

Understandings from Systemic Functional Theory have contributed to the English Language curriculum in Singapore and have influenced the teaching and learning of our students.

We owe Michael an intellectual debt.

Victor Lim Fei

Singapore

Sometimes there are no words -

just gentle silences that whisper softly of loss, sadness and a deep sense of gratitude for a life that has profoundly touched so many.

Rest in peace Michael.

My heartfelt condolences to your family and circle of friends.

You will never be forgotten.

Maree Stenglin

Vale, Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday

Such beautiful words from so many, and no doubt just the beginning of many tributes to come as his and Ruqaiya's legacy continues to unfurl for us all.

I would like to add a self-serving boast: I am one of the few who can say I graduated with Michael! Ok, so we were not graduating for quite the same thing – he for his Honorary Doctorate at the University of Birmingham, UK; me for my MPhil (1987). But nevertheless, his absolute delight in the occasion was infectious and he did indeed see this award (and many other Honorary Doctorates before and after) as a true honour.

The energy and strength of his teaching at Sydney University, including the many inspiring students and colleagues who were gravitating there at the time, are what put me on a path to linguistics, even though as a first-year undergrad, I didn't really know what 'linguistics' was!

A favourite story comes from Honours (fourth) year, when our group of 8 or so were sitting around a table for our first seminar, and at the end, Michael asked if we had any questions. We were hesitant, and eventually one student asked "How do you think?" ???!! The rest of us squirmed in embarrassment; what a ridiculous question! Surely the Professor would dismiss it? But Michael responded, after a moment, with "Well, I do a lot of thinking when I'm shaving, and I'm not sure how women or bearded men ever manage to think." As always, and as attested by so many others, he treated the question with respect and responded with grace and sincerity, and not a little humour.

I am so sad at this inevitable loss, but so grateful to have had the opportunity to know such an extraordinary person. I hope the warmth being expressed by so many at this time will bring some comfort to his family and friends.

with condolences,

Louise Ravelli

Tributes to Michael Halliday

Remembering Professor M.A.K. Halliday

My acquaintance with Prof Halliday dates back to the 80's when I was in Singapore and Prof Halliday was a frequent visitor (as external advisor along with John Sinclair) to the Department of English Language and Literature at NUS. I was his designated driver, assigned to meet him at the airport and drive him to the university. Unfortunately, my only familiarity with his work was his 1964 paper on the users and uses of language (what became the first chapter in Volume 10 of his collected works, entitled *Language and Society*). I don't think that I made a good first impression. Fortunately, however, he was too kind to hold it against me.

In fact, it was Prof Hasan's *Linguistics, Language and Verbal Art*, which later turned me on to Systemic Functional Linguistics, especially how her systemic-functional analysis could reveal so much about Les Murray's *Widower in the Country*. So I decided to try and do my own analysis of the poetry of the Singaporean poet Edwin Thumboo. Applying a systemic-functional approach was like shining a floodlight on the text, revealing the richness and vitality of the poet's meaning-making. I became a believer.

The opportunity in the late 90's to begin working with Prof Halliday on his collected works was when my tutelage in SFL really began. Not just through reading his works, but actually having the opportunity to sit down with this great man and learn first-hand from the Master himself. Yes, I became a

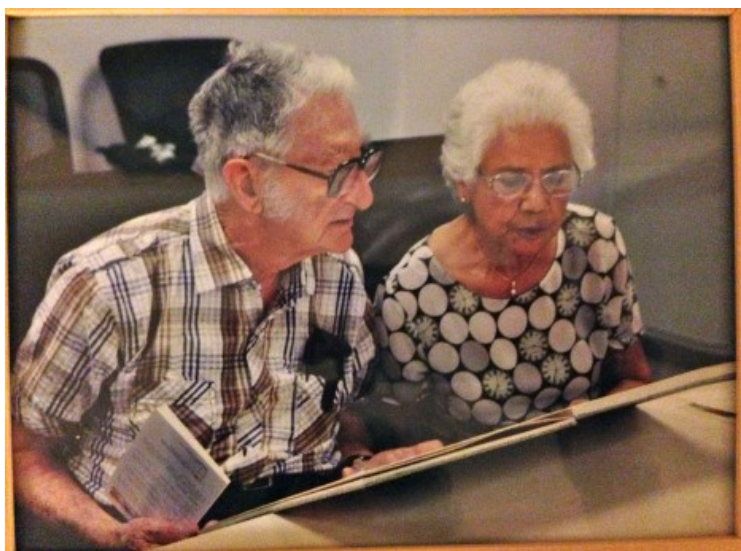
disciple. He was a patient teacher. He never gave you the impression that you had just asked a rather dumb question, though on reflection some of my questions must have made him wonder whether he had made the right choice of editor for his collected works.

What made Professor Halliday a great man was not just his intellect and his scholarship, but his humanity. The positive power and influence of his acts of meaning, both in word and deed, will live on to the extent that we whose lives he has touched keep his vision alive.

In an interview, Annabelle, David and I, did with Profs Halliday and Hasan, a few years back, Prof Halliday said this: 'I, of course, hope that linguistics will continue to throw light on language. I hope that it will, how shall I say it, maintain at least the basic principles that I have always tried to live with. Language as a basic human resource, as something that has, potentially, immense power, which is hidden, often, partly because people are genuinely not aware of how much they are, in fact, depending on it. I used to say this to students sometimes: here is a set of tasks, imagine how much more difficult would they be if you had no language with which to engage with them.'

I believe the spirit of Prof Halliday and the spirit of Prof Hasan live on. I look forward to when we meet again. Until then, I miss you both very much.

Jonathan Webster



Tributes to Michael Halliday

From Peter Fries (distributed on the sysfunc list)

It has been good to read the stories of how Michael's influence impacted everyone's lives —intellectually and personally. Nan and I, are no exception.

I first heard of Halliday in 1961 when Kenneth Pike encouraged a seminar I was attending to read and discuss Michael's categories paper. I found it interesting and began to follow Halliday's work. In the immediately following years Nan and I met Halliday more or less casually on several occasions. But then in 1973 Michael taught two courses at the Linguistic Society of America (=LSA) summer institute in Ann Arbor Michigan—where I had grown up. He taught two classes: one a discussion of cohesion, the other a discussion of language development in children.

Nan and I were so excited about being able to sit in on Michael's classes that we celebrated by having lunch at a local Chinese restaurant before his class and then went to his class. About 5 minutes into the class Nan fell sound asleep and woke up only near the end of the period. Several days later she began to apologize to Michael who said "I knew what happened, You told me that you had just eaten at a Chinese restaurant. It was obvious that you just can't take MSG." I don't remember being aware of MSG before he mentioned it, and certainly not that it might be a problem for Nan.

Since we knew the University of Michigan and Ann Arbor well we offered our services as gofers to help him manage things around the university and the town. At first he was reluctant to accept much help, but then a problem arose with the course packets for Michael's two courses. He had asked a local printer to produce two course packs, a prepublication copy of Cohesion in English and a prepublication copy of Learning How to Mean plus a few other articles. The problem was that the printer had miscollated the two packs. They all had to be taken apart and recollated—and Michael's office had precious little empty flat surface to do anything that involved sorting big piles of paper (the unorganized packets) into small piles (the chapters) and then re-grouping the small piles back into reorganized packets. Needless to say Michael then accepted our help (and that of a few other students who learned of the problem) and we got to know one another well while we collated and

tried to avoid tripping over one another.

During that class he said that he would be eating lunch in the League (a convenient cafeteria on campus) and would be happy if anyone would like to eat with him. For a couple of days we watched and no one took him up on his offer, so after a while we regularly had lunch with him, and we discovered his love of chocolate cake.

The following year he was teaching at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, and one fall the family came to our home to visit, to see the fall colors, and to buy some offal (specifically tripe) from our local meat processor (i.e. the slaughter house). Tripe is generally not generally considered food in the US, and therefore it is difficult to find anywhere other than the source. In fact, when we went to buy some for Michael and Ruqaiya we had to promise on our honor that we would only feed it to animals. (We didn't have any pets but we figured that Neil, Michael and Ruqaiya fit at least one of the definitions of animal.) So, in effect, Michael and his family drove from Chicago to mid-Michigan to have dog food for dinner.

In 1977, I was able to apply for a sabbatical from my university and I had to choose between a one-semester sabbatical at full salary or a year's sabbatical at half pay. Nan and I decided that we would go to Australia to work with Michael and that if we were going to go that far we should go for the full year. We didn't know how we were going to make up the other half of our salary, but we would figure that out when we had to.

When we arrived in Australia Michael and Ruqaiya met us at the airport, took us to their new home and said they'd put us up until we were able to find a place to rent. We had barely begun to search for a place when they came to us and suggested that we might stay in the maid's flat. Since there was no maid, the maid's flat was where Michael kept his library and papers—and his ancient typewriter. They wondered if we would do a few chores such as proof reading, baby sitting or gardening to contribute to the household, and if we liked we could eat evening meals together with them (but we'd have to pay for our portion of the food bill). That sounded like an offer we couldn't refuse. Thus began our roughly 8-month stay with the Hallidays. (*continued over*)

Tributes to Michael Halliday

(continued)

Meals at the Hallidays at that time posed quite a problem for the cook —Ruqaiya. There were six of us: Michael, Ruqaiya, Neil, Michael Halliday's mother (Nan and I regularly referred to her as Mrs. Halliday—as opposed to Ruqaiya) and Nan and me. The problem for the cook was that all of us (except Ruqaiya) had some sort of food restriction, but all the restrictions were different. So finding something that all of us could eat together was very difficult. Nan and I remember, one afternoon, Ruqaiya looking through a bunch of recipes and finally saying “Well, we could have veal marsalla—without the marsalla.”

Ruqaiya was an excellent gourmet cook, specializing in Pakistani dishes. I can't remember having a dish that I didn't like while we were with them. We occasionally had a bit of culture conflict. Periodically the fridge would fill up with left-overs and we would declare a 'left-over meal' to use up all the odds and ends of past meals. Often during such meals Ruqaiya would hand me a bowl with a small serving of some dish (say beans) saying “Peter won't you please finish these beans?” and I would say “yes” and finish them up and then she would begin to worry that I might have wanted more and would offer to cook more. I had to say “No Ruqaiya, I was just finishing them up as you asked me.” (We got the feeling that she and Michael had had this same conversation more than once too.)

While Ruqaiya was in charge of cooking, Michael was in charge of washing the dishes. I helped out by drying. After all the dishes and silver etc. were washed and dried we would then decide which pots could be washed and which pots were soakers.

Of course Nan wanted to help with the cooking, and at the beginning she was given jobs that were pretty simple to do e.g. tipping and topping the beans (as they described it), or cutting up veggies for salads. Gradually Ruqaiya, began to teach Nan some of the dishes she was making and actually let her help prepare the food. Toward the end of our stay Nan was even preparing a few of the dishes for the family on days that Ruqaiya taught classes late into the evening. Some of the best compliments in those days came when one of the family told Ruqaiya that some dish (which Nan had made) was one of her (Ruqaiya's) better dishes.

Academically our Australian experience, though far different than what I had expected, was far more significant in affecting our lives than we had any right to expect. Before we arrived in Australia I had hoped that I would have some special time where I would consult with Michael on a regular basis about the various issues I was investigating. It turned out that during our year in Australia I never had an appointment like that. What we did instead was talk while washing dishes, while walking between the train and the university, etc.—times when Michael was unable to do anything else but was happy to have something to occupy his mind and we could talk about whatever occurred to us. I regularly took the opportunity to talk linguistics at those times. In addition both Michael and Ruqaiya made all their papers (including unpublished drafts) available to me. I regularly took them to the local copy machine, and then read the copies. It was then that I learned of cohesive harmony (which I considered then, and still consider, to be a powerful tool for text analysis). Xeroxing these papers and then mailing the xeroxes home to Michigan turned out to be a major expense—but well worth it for us.

During the first months we were in Sydney, Michael was preparing for the first course in the brand new MA on Applied linguistics, and among other things sent a notice over to the bookstore asking them to order books for the students. The manager of the bookstore who had a great deal of experience with professors greatly overestimating the demand for course books—particularly when the course was in the first semester of its first year—decided that Michael had greatly overestimated the demand for his text books and ordered (as Nan and I remember it) a grand total of seven copies. Needless to say, when the next semester began most of the students reported that the bookstore was out of books for the course. That was in the days before Amazon.com and it took ages for the books to arrive. Nan and I joked that they were coming by clipper ship.

In the years since then we had many interactions with Michael, Ruqaiya and Neil and we have enjoyed and benefited from all.

They changed our lives. We miss Michael and Ruqaiya, and we look forward to seeing more of Neil.

Nan and Peter Fries

Tributes to Michael Halliday



Email to all PETAA members (Primary English Teaching Association Australia) 18/4/2018

Vale Professor Michael Halliday

Dear PETAA members,

It is with great sadness that PETAA has learned of the passing of Professor Michael 'M.A.K.' Halliday.

There would be few teachers of English in Australia today whose contribution to their students' learning has not been enhanced in some way by knowledge or understanding derived from Professor Halliday's inspiring and expansive description of language and how it works.

Both the foundations and much of the impact of Professor Halliday's inestimable contribution to our understanding of human meaning-making can be found in the area of language learning and teaching.

By observing his infant son learning to interact with others through language, Professor Halliday was able not only to reveal the origins of language and learning in infancy, but also to bring into view the nature of language itself.

Early in his career, as Professor Halliday often emphasised, he was a language teacher, which may explain why so many teachers have developed such a close connection with his work.

Later, he devised and led projects which produced literacy resources for schools, including the well-known Breakthrough to Literacy materials. Literacy resources for schools continue to be developed in the Halliday tradition, all of them designed to enhance student achievement, especially the achievement of students facing barriers to learning.

A concern with practical applications of the study of language, especially to advance social justice, is a

constant thread in Professor Halliday's work, and in the work of his colleagues and students.

Australian teachers of English and their students have been conspicuous beneficiaries of practical outcomes derived from the work of Professor Halliday. Since the 1970s each new generation of Halliday-inspired scholars and educators have contributed to language and literacy education in all states of Australia with the goal of improving educational outcomes for all Australian students no matter their background.

Most recently, the contribution of Halliday's description of language can be seen in the Language and Literacy strands of the Australian Curriculum: English and the Literacy general capability. Together they reflect the three dimensions of language learning famously identified by Professor Halliday as learning language (Literacy strand), learning about language (Language strand) and learning through language (Literacy general capability). Moreover, the emphasis is on learning about and learning to use whole purposeful texts rather than on language fragments isolated from meaningful use.

Professor Halliday's influence has a strong presence in the trajectory of PETAA publications and workshops over the last three decades. PETAA publications and PETAA professional learning have played a leading role in sharing with teachers ways in which Professor Halliday's description of language can be used to help students successfully meet the demands of the school curriculum.

As Professor Halliday so eloquently pointed out: "When children learn language, they are not simply engaging in one kind of learning among many; rather, they are learning the foundation of learning itself."

Professor Halliday's legacy will continue to be a reminder into the future of the role of English teaching in laying the foundation for our students' learning, while also providing us with the tools we need to pursue this work in ways that achieve the best possible educational outcomes for our students.

Editor's note: see over the page for links to a video by Professor Fran Christie sent with this message.

Tributes to Michael Halliday

continued from previous page



Halliday's influence and the emergence of language and literacy education, explained



WATCH: Video tracing the development of language and literacy education with Emiritus Professor Frances Christie

Link for video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTHaO23qrKY>

Or google:

PETAA Project 40 Video 3 - Writing as a necessary dimension of language and literacy education

Also see other videos outlining the contribution of SFL to literacy and language learning in primary school education.

Video 2: Literature as the key to imagination, language and meaning (Lorraine MacDonald)

Video 5: Teaching knowledge about language (Bev Derewianka, Sally Humphrey and Robyn Cox)

I was not as fortunate as so many of us to meet Michael in person. I've come to know his socially committed and influential scholarship through his students and friends (now eminent SFL scholars). A great testimony of what Michael created is not only a scholarship that changed a whole discipline but the wonderful and supporting community of talented, critical, and compassionate SFL colleagues all around the world. As we prepare to host the ISFLC in the US after more than 30 years, we are reminded of Michael's reach and legacy, one that he left in good hands with all of you.

Andres Ramirez

I don't know how to express my heartfelt sadness. This is truly a great loss. My heart goes to his family, friends and colleagues around the globe. From now onward, he'd live on our book shelves forever. I was very fortunate to have spent some time with him, and those memories I will cherish throughout my life. Ah, what an inspirational and distinguished soul he was.

With all respect and gratitude

Tazanfal Tehseem (University of Sargodha
PAKISTAN)

Tributes to Michael Halliday

Ed McDonald April 2018

I was lucky enough to be in Sydney a few weeks ago and to visit Michael, and it seemed to me that he was very much waiting to go, to follow his beloved Ruqaiya, and so he took himself off quietly, and without any fuss, just as you would have expected him to do.

I was struck, in Annabelle's earlier message, by the response of one of her family to Michael's death "A great tree has fallen in the forest" – and of course being a linguist, I had to go and find its source. I don't think I quite succeeded in that quest, but SFLers will be interested to know that the last time the phrase was used in significant quantity was for the death of Nelson Mandela. I then stumbled upon a beautiful poem by Maya Angelou on this theme which for me sums up the impact of a figure like Michael – I've already shared it with my Chinese colleagues, so I thought it would bear posting here.

Ed McDonald

When Great Trees Fall

When great trees fall,
rocks on distant hills shudder,
lions hunker down
in tall grasses,
and even elephants
lumber after safety.

When great trees fall
in forests,
small things recoil into silence,
their senses
eroded beyond fear.

When great souls die,
the air around us becomes
light, rare, sterile.
We breathe, briefly.
Our eyes, briefly,
see with
a hurtful clarity.
Our memory, suddenly sharpened,
examines,
gnaws on kind words
unsaid,
promised walks
never taken.

Great souls die and
our reality, bound to
them, takes leave of us.
Our souls,
dependent upon their
nurture,
now shrink, wizened.
Our minds, formed
and informed by their
radiance,
fall away.
We are not so much maddened
as reduced to the unutterable ignorance
of dark, cold caves.

And when great souls die,
after a period peace blooms,
slowly and always
irregularly. Spaces fill
with a kind of
soothing electric vibration.
Our senses, restored, never
to be the same, whisper to us.
They existed. They existed.
We can be. Be and be
better. For they existed.

Maya Angelou

Tributes to Michael Halliday

I was privileged to be one of Michael's first students when he opened the Department of Linguistics at the University of Sydney in 1976. I was one of a number of mature aged students who enrolled in the new MA in Applied Linguistics. There were so many applicants in the first year that Michael and his colleagues were forced to restrict the numbers they could accept- a fact I mention because it shows that interest in Michael had already reached many of us in Sydney long before his arrival.

It was Michael who taught me my first course in Functional Grammar, long before any copy of his book appeared. We used to receive sheets of notes he produced on one of those old smelly roneo machines, and the sheets always smelt of methylated spirits. I still remember the first class I attended with him, when he told us that he would start with the question, 'Why do English speakers use the passive voice?' Given my background (a strong training in traditional school grammar) I was intrigued that this should be a problematic issue.

It was the start of a journey in which- like many others in the network here- Michael changed my life. (How many people in a lifetime can you actually say that about?) He taught me to understand language differently, but also through that he taught me to think about the nature of society and social processes in a totally new way. It was a transformative experience, and the impact has never left me. In later years, he became my friend, and some of my best memories of him and Ruqaiya will always be of walking with them in the Kosciuszko Mountains in the Australian alpine summer months. I shall miss him, though I don't regret his death because he had been unhappy and in pain for so long. He was a great scholar, a gifted teacher and a generous, even humble man. I doubt that I shall see his like again.

Fran Christie

I first heard Michael Halliday when he spoke about his study of his son's language development in Ann Arbor at the annual conference. His work was highly influential on mine because he saw language to be studied in use and in social context. He had a theory of language development which was close to mine. I always meant to write an article on what his work meant to understanding the social-personal view of language development and why generativists had distorted his work. But I never did.

At a conference in Brisbane they took us across to the world's fair by boat and on the way back he and I chatted while many others on the deck above strained to listen to our conversation.

Michael came to our weekend course one year at U of Arizona and on Friday evening gave a brilliant presentation comparing his and other theories of language. Unfortunately, we lost the tape recording. He never used any recording equipment to my knowledge but could perfectly mimic speech sounds including those of young children.

His work has largely been ignored by American linguists but fortunately he wrote extensively and future generations will learn from his brilliance.

We've lost a great intellect, but his work will live on.

Ken Goodman

My thanks to Michael Halliday..... Not sure where I'd be without "whenever we (children, adults, language users all) use language, we learn language, learn through language and learn about language." And they occur simultaneously, no sequence. This focus and Brook's Smith's (thanks, too) — perceiving, ideating and presenting — are basic to my beliefs, knowledge, ideas and concerns about curriculum and the other whole language pillars throughout the educational spectrum.

Yetta Goodman

Tributes to Michael Halliday

Like many others, I owe a huge debt in my professional life to the theory and tools that Michael Halliday developed to contribute to our understanding of the role of language in social life, and especially in education. I had read Halliday's *Language as Social Semiotic* and *Learning How to Mean* in earlier studies, but it was encountering his 1985 first edition of *Introduction to Functional Grammar* that gave me the tools I needed for the research agenda I wanted to develop. In a fortuitous moment, as a doctoral student who was looking for a way to think about the grammatical development of children and how we could describe that development, I noticed the volume on a library shelf and borrowed it. One of my professors agreed that I could read it as an independent study course, along with two other books he thought I should also read (their titles have long escaped my memory). That took me on a journey that would help me not only in my dissertation research, when I was just beginning to grasp the scope and affordances of the theory and grammar, but also shape my future research to this day.

When I moved to my first professorial position in the UC Davis linguistics department, I was fortunate to have as

I, like many of you feel that my intellectual and professional life were modeled and influenced by Michael's ideas and theory. I, also, consider myself among the lucky ones who were able to meet him and spend time together with Ruqaiya and him. Mary Schleppegrell and I went to the Cardiff, 25th ISFC conference that Robin Fawcett and Gordon Tucker organized, there Michael and Christian Matthiessen gave a wonderful workshop for an entire week. It was also our first contact with many friends and colleagues from the systemic community. As a special moment, I cherish the hike that we had in the moors of the Welsh coast (cannot remember the name, sorry Robin!) where Mary and I, got to be by Michael and had an enlightening conversation with him that ranged from Marxism and education to metafunctions. In 2007, I spent time with Michael and Ruqaiya at Odense, at the 34th ISFC that Uwe Helm Petersen organized. There must have been three or four people at my talk at that time, and Michael was one of them. The same year, I was surprised and bewildered when I received a letter written by Michael, asking me to participate in the first conference for the inauguration of The Halliday Centre for Intelligent Applications of Language Studies in Hong

a colleague Cecilia Colombi, also newly hired in Spanish linguistics. We soon realized that we shared an interest in Halliday's work, and began studying together. In 1998 we traveled to the summer ISFL conference at Cardiff, where we learned the grammar from Michael Halliday and Christian Matthiessen, further strengthening our understanding and also providing an opportunity to get to know Michael as a person. In the 20 years since that conference I have had several opportunities to interact with Michael and Ruqaiya, and each encounter has left indelible memories. Most recently, in April 2015, I participated in a conference in Beijing, and at a table over dinner, heard Michael tell gripping stories about his experiences in China as the Red Army surrounded and occupied Beijing.

Michael Halliday's life and work have left us a legacy that will continue to inspire the next generation of researchers. I believe his influence in linguistics and education is still in its early phases, and will continue to grow as researchers and educators recognize that his socially engaged theory of language offers a resource that is unmatched.

Mary J. Schleppegrell (University of Michigan)

Kong that Ruqaiya and John Webster organized. What an inspiring and exciting conference that meeting was. It was also the opportunity to socialize with Ruqaiya and Michael. Later on, in 2013, in Guangzhou, at the 40th ISFC that Huang Guowen, Chang Chenguang and Wendy Bowcher organized, we got to spend two weeks together and share many great discussions and conversations as well as delicious meals! Finally, in 2015, I was honored to be invited to the symposium for the launch of 'The Halliday-Hasan Fund for the Study of Language and Other Systems of Meaning' in Beijing that Alex Xuanwei Peng organized. There we missed Ruqaiya but we had the opportunity to be with Michael for almost a whole week, what a treat!

Michael greatly enriched my life on many levels. It is quite sad that his boundless intellect and energy that helped motivate many of us to think creatively and differently will no longer be with us, but my moments with Michael will be with me forever. And, of course, his thinking will influence many generations to come. My deepest condolences to his family and the ones close to him,

Cecilia Colombi (UC Davis)

Tributes to Michael Halliday

Here's what I owe Michael Halliday's brilliant work

It was significant for me that Halliday called his book about Nigel 'Learning How To Mean' rather than giving it a title which implied learning how to talk was a process of 'acquiring' something called 'language'.

This way of framing his data on Nigel helped me understand that Halliday thought of language as a system for constructing meaning rather than some kind of esoteric 'knowledge' or 'stuff' that existed independently of the human mind and had to be 'acquired'. This is what the terms 'systemic' and 'functional' implied for me.

He also taught me that language could only be 'learned' by using it to construct meanings and sharing these meanings with other users of the same language. His notion of the simultaneous learning of and about language while engaged in using it became (for me) the basis of a constructivist pedagogy that aligned with biological and cultural evolution theories.

I think the genrists who disrespected Ken Goodman's work subtly re-framed knowledge about 'genre' (I think Halliday preferred 'register') as some kind of stuff that had to be 'acquired' through a specially designed pedagogy, and this is where I parted professional company with them.

Brian Cambourne

It was so sad to hear Prof. Halliday's passing!

21 years ago, I heard his name as a functionalist in my first linguistics courses, and in 2008 was introduced to SFL by Prof. Jim Benson and late Prof. Bill Greaves. Halliday's SFL was interesting to me, so I tried to learn more and more about it, to use it in research, and to introduce it to my students, as well. I'm really grateful to him and all his efforts put in making SFL known to everyone. RIP Prof. Halliday!

Laya Heidari

I had the privilege of publishing work by M.A.K. Halliday over the past 28 years. I could see his impact grow from year to year, but not his ego! He had a profound effect on the field in ways that are only starting to become apparent.

Equinox sends sincere condolences to all of his friends and family.

Janet Joyce (Equinox Publishing)

No words could express my extreme sadness at the news that Michael has left us! The world has lost one of the greatest linguists and an outstanding philosopher on social semiotics! The SFL community has lost its founder and its most powerful and inspirational guide! We Chinese people have lost a great friend (We all know that he had cherished a profound love for Chinese and the Chinese language ever since his childhood). For myself, I have lost a dear teacher and one of my best friends!

Scholars in the Chinese SFL community have exchanged many messages in WeChat in memory of Michael Halliday. Leaders of the two Chinese societies based on the theories of SFL have written articles expressing their deepest condolence on the passing away of this great scholar. They have appeared on the website address by the name of '???iResearch' (Sorry: characters lost in email). The writers include Hu Zhuanglin, Huang Guowen, Peng Xuanwei, Zhang Delu, Li Zhanzi, He Wei and myself. We believe that Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan will live forever in our mind!

My deepest condolence goes to his family and those close to him.

Fang Yan

Tributes to Michael Halliday

A letter from the Academy of the Humanities:

It is with deep regret that the Academy informs you of the passing of Emeritus Professor Michael Halliday FAHA, who passed away on Sunday 15 April at the age of 93 years.

Professor Halliday was a world authority in sociolinguistics, and a scholar whose influence on the field was extensive and revolutionary. He was elected to the Academy in 1979, and served as a Council member from 1981 to 1983.

Professor Halliday initially studied Chinese language and literature at the University of London before changing his focus to linguistics, undertaking his postgraduate studies first in China and then at the University of Cambridge, where he received his PhD in Chinese linguistics in 1955. Professor Halliday began his career as an assistant lecturer in Chinese at Cambridge, before moving on to hold positions at the University of Edinburgh, University College London, Indiana University, Stanford University, the University of Illinois, and Essex University. In 1976 he moved to Australia as Foundation Professor of Linguistics at the University of Sydney, where he remained until his retirement in 1987.

Professor Halliday worked in multiple areas of linguistics, both theoretical and applied, and was especially concerned with applying the basic principles of language to the theory and practices of education. He is widely celebrated as the founder of the theory of language known as Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and is the

author of several highly regarded articles and monographs on topics ranging from grammar and semantics, child language development and acquisition, the function of language in education, discourse analysis, the language of science, stylistics, and natural language processing. Professor Halliday will also be remembered for his energetic and dynamic commitment to teaching, and for his instrumental role in the development of curricula for the Department of Linguistics at the University of Sydney.

Even in retirement, Professor Halliday remained an active and influential scholar, holding visiting appointments at Singapore, Birmingham, ICU Tokyo, Copenhagen, the University of Hong Kong and the City University of Hong Kong. In 1987 he was awarded the status of Emeritus Professor at the University of Sydney and Macquarie University. He was awarded honorary doctorates from the University of Birmingham, York University, the University of Athens, Macquarie University, the University of British Columbia and Lingnan University. In addition to his election as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, Professor Halliday was a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy and Foreign Member of the Academia Europaea.

We extend our deepest sympathies to the Halliday family.

With regards

Emeritus Professor Elizabeth Minchin FAHA
Honorary Secretary (Academy of the Humanities)

I find it difficult to express the gratitude I feel to Michael Halliday. I met him and heard him speak only a few times, but he has had a profound effect on my life in many ways. He was a wonderful, incredible person. My sincere condolences to his family and loved ones.

John Knox (Macquarie University)

It's sad to learn of the passing of Michael, one of the greatest legends of our time, whose contribution to the field of Linguistics is unequalled. He remains with us in memories, volumes and pages.

Ernest Akerejola

Tributes to Michael Halliday

As a number of tributes have already hinted, Michael was a great lover of nature and walking.

In 2005, I remember sitting with Michael and telling him that I was just about to go do the Routeburn Track in New Zealand. Having walked it himself, he readily offered his advice on tackling this three-day tramp through the South Island's Fiordlands National Park: like, remembering to look up once in a while to take in the breath-taking views. Taking plenty of scroggin might have been another. He has also walked the Coast-to-Coast track in the UK (more than once!), and in 2015, I had the pleasure of walking Hadrian's Wall, also coast-to-coast, but a little further north, a few ks shorter, and slightly less challenging. On both occasions, I thought of Michael (you get plenty of time to think when walking up to 20km a day), of the number of people who are, every day, walking in his footsteps, and taking up the challenges that his theories have presented us. What a breath-taking view that is!

Here are just a few of those people:



Helen Caple, UNSW

Tributes to Michael Halliday

I and my family would like to join you all in sending our heartfelt condolences to Michael Halliday's son and surviving relatives.

It was indeed sad news to learn of his passing, even though it was known to be not far away. Many people will remember Michael for his kindness, interest and willingness to talk to other people with respect and interest on all sorts of topics that interested them.

I remember that during the breaks in the conference organised by Rachel Whittaker (U. Autònoma de Madrid), held at 'La Cristalera' outside Madrid, Michael and Enrique (my husband) engaged in a lively conversation on the possibilities of spending some time crossing the range of mountains called 'Los Picos de Europa'. Michael often mentioned this on other occasions.

Our students at the Universities Complutense and Autònoma welcomed Michael and Ruqaiya's visits and found them inspirational. Many doctoral theses have been the outcome of these visits. It is good to realise that Michael's beneficial influence on the teaching of English has been of great value here in Spain, as in other countries.

Angela Downing (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)

Like others, I owe so much to Michael Halliday. His work is the foundation of the most significant influence on my professional life. Michael Halliday was one of the most personally inspiring people I have been fortunate enough to know.

Len Unsworth (Australian Catholic University)

By giving us a 'language' to talk about how meaning is construed, he has in turn made all our lives more meaningful.

Miranda

Unfortunately, I did not have the privilege of meeting Michael in person like many of you, but I have known him through the great legacy he left behind, not only his work, but also his influence on the SFL community. I saw it in the family-like meetings in Aachen, 2015. I saw it in the person of Margaret, Christian, and Steiner. SFL has become a system for love. RIP

Waleed Othman

I too would like to share some memories of Michael. He was a beautiful human being and I confess to some tears when I read the news of his passing. Michael was very kind to me, agreeing to supervise my PhD in 1980. It was an early exercise in corpus linguistics, and Michael's commitment to the use of textual data as evidence and his pioneering work on the textual dimension were inspirational for my topic. He was also tolerant and supportive of my desire to adopt a theoretically eclectic approach (then, and subsequently throughout my career at UNSW). Anticipating frustrating interruptions if we met at Sydney University, Michael invited me to his house at Killara for regular supervision meetings, where I greatly appreciated not just the opportunity for extended intense discussions but also his (and Ruqaiya's) warmth and hospitality.

I feel privileged to have experienced over the years, like so many others, Michael's disarming interest in others' lives and ideas. All were treated with equal respect and curiosity.

We have lost a brilliant linguist, and a truly kind and gentle man. However he will never be forgotten and his legacy will live on.

Peter Collins

Tributes to Michael Halliday

My first encounter with Michael as a teacher was as a beneficiary of his great generosity. He offered a small number of us (4 or 5 TESOL teachers I think) a one-year preliminary course in Linguistics to allow us to be accepted into the Master's degree at Sydney Uni. None of us had the prerequisite – Linguistics in our first degree. But he thought our language teaching experience more than made up for it and convinced the university to agree to his one-off preliminary course.

The unbelievable luxury of having a 2-hour seminar every week with Michael at the same time as attending his lecture courses (each one was a year long – remember those?! This did not just open up the world of linguistics to me but gave me an understanding of human society that has enriched my life and work ever since. And provided me with a rare model of caring and scaffolded teaching that has guided me in my work since then.

One course was 'The Theory of Language Structure' (in 1980 still a roneo-ed version of IFG – but only up to 'Structure at the level of Clause' – so, the next year I audited the course to do 'Below the Clause'). Right from the very first lecture of the course, I left the room with answers to questions I'd never been able to answer in my years of language teaching despite my English degree and teaching diploma. The other course, Language and Society began with Aristotle and Plato and ended with his

own and his students' work, and was the most stimulating, exciting, rich course of study I have ever experienced – one which also allowed me to fully understand my ethnic, class and linguistic identities for the first time.

I still have handwritten lecture notes from both courses. Michael's brilliance as a teacher included knowing the exact amount of pausing, rephrasing and emphasising to allow for my recording of different size headings, numbering and systematic underlining of main points throughout (as well as bracketed asides which included jokes – often involving Yorkshire).

My favourite Greek experience with Michael was when I was lucky enough to be living in Athens in the early 1990s when he opened a conference on discourse and accepted an honorary doctorate from Athens University. I went to the conference and the conferral and one day took him on my favourite off-the-tourist track walk on Philopappou Hill opposite the Acropolis, which he absolutely loved – then we had tea and cakes at my place and nattered about all our SFL colleagues.

Thank you for everything Michael. We will miss you but your work lives on and grows. Your intellect, wisdom, generosity, kindness, humility and humour will never be forgotten.

Dorothy Economou (The University of Sydney)

Like so many others, I am truly saddened by the loss of Michael Halliday. I have found it extremely moving to read the various tributes to Michael and I like Ed I think it is a great idea to collect these. I strongly endorse the recurring comments about Michael's huge intellectual contribution and also about his generosity and kindness as a human being. I had the good fortune, as a PhD student, of being supervised by Michael, and I remain deeply grateful to him for his insights and his patience with me as a somewhat recalcitrant student. As with so many others, he had a profound impact on my life: on my career and indeed on how I think about the world. Michael is one of those rare people who leave the world a better place for having been here. It has been an honour and a privilege to know him and to consider him a friend. My sincere condolences to his family and to his close and supportive friends.

Jenny Hammond (University of Technology, Sydney)

Tributes to Michael Halliday

I echo those comments by those here, particularly that Michael Halliday was not only a scholar of extremely rare dedication, intelligence, integrity and curiosity, but also was an absolutely kind and generous person. I was lucky enough to speak with him on a number of occasions, but it was the first one that stands out, as I was a PhD student at my first ISFC pre-conference institute in 2005, which took place in lovely Manly. At the dinner to conclude the amazing seminars and workshops there, we were joined by Michael and Ruqaiya. It turns out that the Italian restaurant did not have a beer to his liking; I quickly seized the opportunity to run out to a nearby bottle shop and get some for us to share. This also gave me the excuse to sit with him, which was my obvious ulterior motive. This great scholar patiently listened to my poor explanation of my PhD project, and offered absolutely kind encouragement. Once that was out of the way, we had a marvellous conversation about his time in China and the very odd situations language scholars often find themselves in. His support and inclusion of all of us permeates the field, and provides a model for behaviour within and beyond our academic lives. As others have already said, we will treasure that legacy and continue to build upon it.

Derek Irwin (Nottingham University)

I have always thought of myself as once removed from the direct teaching of Michael – I was taught by the next generation of great SFL scholars including Rhondda, Sue, David and Christian. So for me, Michael and Ruqaiya both, initially had a kind of rock star status. They were rock stars in the new world understanding that stumbling across SFL had brought to me in the late 90s (and has only grown in the decades since).

My first meeting with Michael was at a fund raising event “the importance of bringing Ernest”, organised at Macquarie by Annabelle to bring my now dear friends, the Akerejola family, to Sydney. I recall, like so many others, what a kind, generous, humble and very un-rockstarish man Michael was.

Despite sharing the same home city of Sydney with Michael and Ruqaiya, my most treasured memories are of time spent chatting, walking, sharing meals and taking train and bus journeys in India, Japan and through Denmark and into Germany. I feel utterly privileged to have these memories.

I am so sad he’s gone but like Fran, Annabelle and David, I am at peace with his death because I think life without Ruqaiya was difficult.

Maria Herke

I’m really sad to hear this sad news!!

There is no doubt he was one of the brightest minds of our times!

It’s wonderful to hear of his great heart and his warm inspirational ways.

My condolences to his family and all his friends and colleagues who enjoyed the possibility of sharing ideas, research, talks with him!

Samiah Hassan

We all share so much. I began my teaching career in 1966, while I was writing my PhD thesis on George Eliot. What I didn’t realize, when I was hired by Michael Gregory (Scale and Category), was that I was supposed also to teach linguistics, about which I knew absolutely nothing. It was the best thing that ever happened to me, and everyone else at the time – we were all in the same boat. Michael and Ruqaiya – and all of you – have enriched my intellectual and human life immeasurably.

Jim Benson

Tributes to Michael Halliday

Thank you for collating responses. I've just had a reflective time reading everyone's experiences and thoughts, watching the video of Michael and recalling my own brief times in his presence ... and Ruquiya's too. He gave me my academic life, as he gave to so many others, and his generosity of spirit was unparalleled. Vale M.A.K. Halliday.

Lorraine McDonald

I'm sad at Michael Halliday's passing.

I am ever grateful for his compelling insights and expositions of functional grammar, and the wide range of applications and developments they have produced, particularly those in the field of education. These have been fundamental to my collaborative work with academics in promoting undergraduate students' academic literacy development.

As Mick wrote 'he continues in us all'.

Ursula McGowan (The University of Adelaide)

I feel very very sad since I know that Michael is no longer with us. My words surely do not reach to express my feelings. Many of you have said it better, much better. I only know that although I never had the good fortune to talk personally with Michael, reading and trying to understand his deep reflections on language has been one of the things that accompanied me during difficult times. He was maybe one of my best friend on those occasions. And that is something that I will not fail to thank him for. I am sure that the clarity of his thought will accompany me the rest of my days.

My deepest condolences to Michael's family.

Elsa Ghio

I'd like to join with everyone in our community who is sharing thoughts and memories of Michael this week as well as sending sincere condolences to Michael's family.

I first met Michael in 1976 just after he founded the Dept of Linguistics at the University of Sydney. As an untrained ESL teacher, I thought I should extend my knowledge of English grammar (how right I was!) and began to sit in on his first undergraduate classes there of half a dozen or so students. What amazing luck to be there! We received purple-inked roneo-ed handouts week by week that were the very slim beginnings of the first edition of IFG, came to grips with the newly published Cohesion in English, learned about Bernstein's coding orientations in semantics classes, had sessions on English intonation, and so much more. I will never forget the intellectual thrill and excitement of those and succeeding years when, as a graduate student and tutor, I was able to attend Michael's classes. Apart from gradually understanding more about SFL, I learned so much from his generous and humane teaching and assessment style; however ill-informed or wide-of-the mark our questions and comments might be, he always treated every single student in the class with patience and complete respect. No one was ever intimidated in his presence.

As for so many others, meeting Michael and becoming immersed in his wonderfully extravagant theory of language completely changed the course and meaning of my life and I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to know and learn from such a wonderful man. His ideas are flourishing in places all over the world and his legacy will continue to grow. But we will miss him.

Clare Painter

Tributes to Michael Halliday

Thank you to Annabelle for sharing this news, and thank you to the many people who have shared their thoughts and feelings with us all. Many have put my feelings into words far better than I can at this point.

I want to add my voice to the many who have been won over by M.A.K. Halliday's theories and also by Michael's warmth, humour and charm.

To add to the stories that are being shared, here is the account of my first meeting with Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan.

I had just (a few weeks before) started my PhD studies in Liverpool with the wonderful Geoff Thompson, who was hosting the ISFC. It was the first day of the conference. I was overawed and knew nobody. Lunch came and as I sat down, a gentleman sat down on my right. "Hello, I'm Michael" he said. As if I didn't know!! Across from me came the next introduction "I'm Ruqaiya." Well, I knew that but of course I introduced myself too. "And I'm Frances" said the voice on my left. Names that had been just authors on books and papers; names whose ideas had not only blown me away with their originality and perception, but had also been directly relevant to my life as a language teacher and as someone with an abiding fascination with language; these names had now not only become real but had become people who are happy to sit down and talk to you as an equal. All three were kind and curious and made me feel immediately at ease and one of the community. It was the best 'find-a-newbie day' ever for me. Every time that I met Michael again (and there simply were not enough of those occasions) he remembered me and, as with everyone else, was always generous with his time and open to discussion on any topic.

I look forward to celebrating Michael and Ruqaiya's memories with other people in the community and hearing of ways that we can maintain their legacy alongside the work we all do to develop our approach to the study of social semiotics.

My deepest condolences go to Michael's family and those that were close to him.

Nick Moore

I was not directly taught by Halliday but had the opportunity to hear him speak at many forums and to speak with him several times on a personal level as well. I remember boarding a plane for my first 'off-shore' ISFC in Vancouver in 2010 and noting Michael and Ruqaiya in the Business Class section on my way through. When I was seated .. a way back, I said to the steward, 'If you are speaking to one of the Business Class stewards, tell them to let Professors Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan know that there is a fan up the back. Just after we levelled off after take-off, Michael appeared at my seat – he would have already been about 86. I am sure Michael did not know me from a piece of cheese, but he was charming and generous and stayed for several minutes chatting. I have told that story to hundreds and hundreds of undergraduate and postgraduate students I have introduced his theory to since – and I have always teared up as I did so. A good start to teacher student bonding!

On a different note, I also once sat down with a prospective 'boy-friend' to explain the metafunctions and why he would have to understand them if our relationship were to grow. Luckily he didn't and the Write it Right project came along. The rest is history.

Sally Humphrey (Australian Catholic University)

Warm thoughts from Michael's friends in the North!

Eva Maagerø

This is, indeed, very sad news.

Michael was an exceptional researcher and teacher, and an example for us all in his deep-seated humanism. My professional and personal world will not be the same without him.

Let us cherish his legacy.

Erich Steiner (Saarland University)

Tributes to Michael Halliday

The news of Michael's passing has affected us all so deeply. I can't think of the words to express my feelings now other than gratitude. I am so grateful to have been able to meet and discuss with both Michael and Ruqaiya. I have learned so much from them both, I am still learning and I selfishly wish they were still with us in person so I could continue to learn from them. They have both left more ideas and insights into language than any one of us could ever hope to deal with in a lifetime, so we cannot feel that they did not leave us with enough to do!

I would like to share with you all a video we took of the last visit Michael and Ruqaiya made to Cardiff where they very generously shared their time with our staff and students a few years ago. Please forgive me if you cannot access this video as I've uploaded it to YouTube. I could perhaps find another sharing platform if there is enough interest.

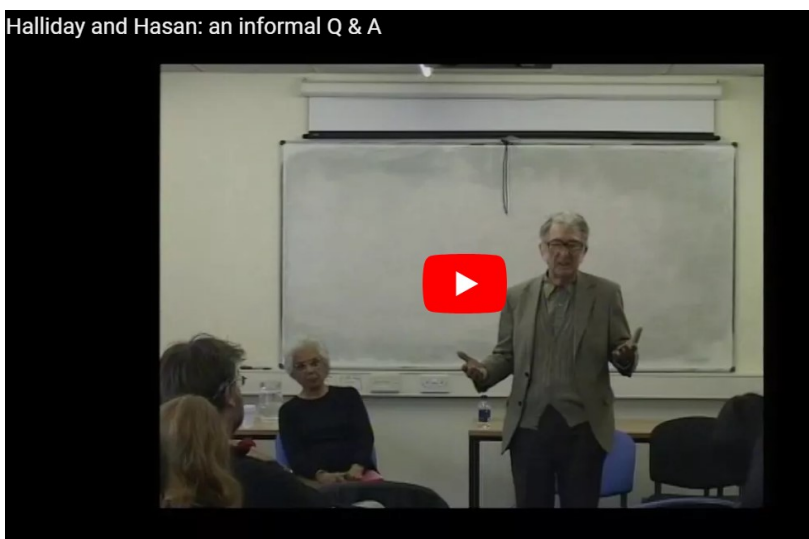
<https://youtu.be/D-YSwFP1AbU>

I would also like to express my gratitude to our friends and colleagues in Australia who have given so much of their time to care for Michael and Ruqaiya. You know who you are.

My thoughts are with Michael's family, his close and extended family,

Lise Fontaine (Cardiff University)

Halliday and Hasan: an informal Q & A



One of the wonders of the many-wondered man that was Michael is how he made and kept friendships across the decades, and how he was equally happy to chat with people from his own generation and right on down: interested in their jobs and their lives and what made them tick. How *did* a man who had so much interesting stuff going on in his own head manage even to find the *time* to take such a deep interest in the contents of everyone else's? A little exchange that sums up his particular qualities for me took place when he was the supervisor for my BA Hons thesis. Now I have to say I was really completely unprepared for the experience of being supervised by such a mind, and in retrospect took much less advantage of it than I should have. I was the type of highly neurotic student who found even writing an essay an almost sanity-shaking challenge, and normally by the time I'd submitted an essay I'd be *convinced* it was absolutely the worst piece of work I'd ever done. These feelings didn't seem to be much affected by the outcome which was, more often than not, a good - sometimes very good - grade. So you can imagine the state I was in over the months of writing my Honours thesis! No doubt Michael had picked up on this; though I'm sure I thought I was maintaining the perfect facade. I came into a meeting with him one day and noticed that he was looking at me rather intently. I said nervously: "What is it?" He said: "Oh just looking to see how the mood is". And then perhaps a little while later: "You know, I think one of the main functions of the supervisor is simple encouragement". How could you not love a man like that!

Ed McDonald

Tributes to Michael Halliday

Dear Michael,

I am extremely sad to learn that you have gone too far and away.

I clearly remember those precious days when I first met you at the University of Sydney in 1977 and began to learn your rich and insightful way of studying language/languages and society. All of your writings and talks I have since read and heard have completely changed and enriched my way of thinking about language and semiotics. Without knowing you and all the people you have enlightened, the whole of my academic life would have been not so much different but rather sadly fruitless.

I do thank you for everything so far, and do wish you a peaceful sleep with your beloved Ruqaiya.

Noboru Yamaguchi, 17 April 2018

On behalf of the ALSFAL community I want to express our condolence in this sad moment. As many have expressed, Michael Halliday's legacy will stay with us for years to come. We feel fortunate to have grown under his great shadow and to have enriched our lives with his inspiring insights into language and its applications. May this feeling of enormous gratitude turn into further action for the expansion of his thought.

Norma Barletta
ALSFAL president

I would like to join in the expression of acknowledgement and gratitude to our dear professor.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and emotion.

Patricia Preciado

I also want to express my gratitude to Michael here – thank you Michael for your courage, your foresight, and for the depth of your engagement with both big and little people as well as with ideas.

One contribution of Michael's that hasn't been mentioned I think is his role in kicking off ecolinguistics – including his challenge 'to replace war discourse with peace discourse, the discourse of borrowing with that of saving, and the discourse of building with that of repair'. Of course we need these shifts as much in the ecosystem of the academy itself as in the world at large but following Michael's lead we mustn't be frightened off.

Like others I feel so lucky to have had life-changing opportunities to learn from both Michael and, more directly, his wife and intellectual soulmate (tautological?) Ruqaiya.

My heartfelt condolences to their family and many dear friends.

Alison Moore (University of Wollongong)

Along with so many others, I'm saddened by the loss of Michael Halliday. An inspirational academic, a generous soul, a person you'd want to sit next to at the dinner table. Always so kind and gentle. In Hong Kong a few years ago, he came on a walk one time with me and my daughters spotting and trying to name butterflies... He was so patient, caring and loving with my girls. The world is a more meaningful place due to MAK Halliday! How fortunate we are to have known Michael and to benefit from his work.

My condolences to his family.

Gail Forey

Tributes to Michael Halliday

Like Mick's, my lifepath was completely turned around by Michael (though in my case twice).

And, like Margaret – who first introduced me-wonderingly-to Scale and Category Grammar in 1965, I cannot forget his (often private) kindness and consideration, or his generosity with his attention and time, even when he was exhausted. And then on top of that, as Jim pointed out when Michael retired, his modesty.

So I can't resist quoting a one-sentence epitaph, to a philologist, Richard Garnett, which I recently came across. Garnett could reasonably be regarded as one of the fathers of English dialectology, who initiated a huge body of work in the 19th and 20th centuries. His colleagues at the British Museum-where he was a Keeper-wrote:

"Few men have left so fragrant a memory."

Michael, the father of SFL (indeed, originally its "onlie begetter"), who in the 20th and 21st centuries has also inspired a huge body of work, is another of the "few" who have left a fragrant memory. And as well as being a true original, he was a great teacher, very good company, and a very nice man.

Martin Davies

Really very sad news for me too. MAK Halliday's work was a great influence on my practice of discourse analysis and will sure continue to be for generations of linguists, language practitioners, teachers and students to come. I am honoured to have had the one occasion to meet and talk with Prof Halliday — 34th ISFC Cong in Denmark 2007. I offer my heartfelt prayers and condolences.

Sridevi SRINIWASSENOR (University of Malaya)

This is sad news indeed. Michael Halliday was one of the great minds of his generation. I consider it a privilege to have met him on a number of (all too rare) occasions. He was more than a great linguist: he was a great person.

David Banks

Rest in peace, Sir M. A. K. Halliday. In French they say that, upon their passing, people 'disappear'. Michael Halliday may have vanished, but his name and legacy will forever remain among the greatest of minds.

My sincere condolences to his family and friends.

Margo Lecompte-Van Poucke (Macquarie University)

I think many of us were influenced in life path, if not by Michael, by his work. In 1984, I took time off my computer science path to do one year of linguistics, to help in my honours year work on NLP. But in that year, Michael's teaching (and that of others such as Jim) made me change direction, and systemic linguistics became my path.

Michael is not gone, but continues in all of us who pursue his work.

Mick O'Donnell

Very sad news indeed!

I was especially moved by Prof Halliday's plenary on 'language evolving' at Vancouver SFL congress a few years ago. Yes, Mick, Prof Halliday and Prof Hasan are still with us.

Our deepest condolences to their family.

Libo Gui (National Institute of Education, Singapore)

Tributes to Michael Halliday

This is indeed very sad news! Many of us have been inspired by Michael and his contribution.

My condolences to his family and friends.

Kumaran (Universiti Sains Malaysia)

I share the sadness of the whole SFL community for the loss of Michael Halliday.

My deepest condolences to his family and closest friends,

Susana Murcia Bielsa (Universidad Autonoma de Madrid)

This is indeed very sad news! Michael Halliday was not only a great linguist but also a great person – very approachable and always ready to help. He will stay with us in memory and his insights will continue to be a great source of inspiration. My condolences to his family, colleagues and friends.

Inger Lassen

This is very sad news for the Linguistics community, in general, and for SFL, in particular. Those of us who were lucky to meet him and be inspired by his work are mourning today, but his legacy is etched into our minds and into those of the next generation...

My deepest condolences to his family and friends. Thanks for passing on the news, Annabelle.

Julia Lavid Lopez (Universidad Complutense)

Very sad to hear the news... To many of us, he is not only a great linguist but also the most generous and gentle person. He will always be with us.

Chenguang Chang

I would like to express my personal condolences on the loss of such a great man (great in both personality and linguistics). The sad news arrived on April 16 and just as one of my colleagues who is NOT a systemicist but a discourse analyst (Dr. Huan) said 'The whole world is in profound grief because of the loss of Michael Halliday'. Thousands of messages and condolences fly in social media like Wechat from Monday morning till now and they are still flying in grief.

In 1990s I was persuaded into doing a doctoral degree in psychology but I quitted because I found my real interest was in SFL, and soon after that I decided to pursue a degree under the supervision of Prof. Guowen Huang. In 2003 an opportunity was presented to me for a second Ph.D. in another field of linguistics at the University of Illinois. Without much consideration, I decided not to try that. With comparisons and contrasts, I preferred to continue my research in SFL.

Thanks to Halliday and his theory, I found my way of academic life. Thanks to Halliday and his theory, I found the best way to the truth of language, 'language in use' in particular. On this particular occasion, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to Michael Halliday for his theory. On this particular occasion, I would like to bring back my memories (in dozens) of meeting Michael in the past 20 years.

Many years ago, I read a statement in a book by two philosophers from Canada which goes like this: Charles Darwin is the greatest mind in biology, Albert Einstein in physics and Ludwig Wittgenstein in philosophy. In my understanding, Ludwig Wittgenstein's thinking on language in use was and is still in theory, but Michael Halliday has worked a way out both in theory and in practice on 'language in use'. In this logic, Michael Halliday is the greatest mind in linguistics. Many non-systemicists may not agree on this claim, but I believe time will convince them of this. Wittgenstein passed away too early but his thinking has become more and more influential. Halliday passed away hours ago and his thinking will become more influential than ever in the future. Their theories are so profound that it takes time to chew and digest before the power and energy of 'these foods' can be generated. May Michael rest in peace.

Bingjun Yang (Shanghai Jiao Tong University)

Tributes to Michael Halliday

I am very sad to learn of Michael's passing. It is a consolation to know that he was able to go peacefully and was well cared for in his final years. His legacy lives on. My condolences go out to his family and friends.

Sabine Bartsch



I was very saddened to hear of Professor Halliday passing. Condolences to his family. I am not an academic linguist but a curious language teacher who stumbled into the ISFLC in Saarbruecken Germany in 2007. I had the great pleasure to sit at breakfast with Michael and despite my then lack of academic linguistic knowledge and terminology, he was extremely interested in the special school I worked at and very encouraging. He later spotted me at a presentation and intentionally sat by me to give 'verbal sidenotes' on the relevance of the material to my work. I was also amazed that he remembered me, when we met again several years later.

The revolution of SFL awareness on both my and many of my colleagues' teaching methods was ground breaking. Although retired, I still get feedback from former teaching colleagues who are successfully using SFL informed methods.

May his influence in education continue to spread, become deep rooted, persist and grow!

Alan Hess (Isle of Man)

My deep respect to the memory of a man whose vision of language and of the social role of linguistics deeply touched my life. A man like Michael Halliday stays with us for ever.

My condolences to his family and friends.

Mafalda Mendes (Universidade de Lisboa)

Sol heard sorrowfully such sad news about the departure of Prof. Halliday. Though he passed away but his name and academic reputation will remain forever. May God bless his soul.

My condolences to his family and friends.

Hashim Alhuseini

Very sad news indeed. Thank you to all of you who were close to him and cared for him so thoughtfully. And thanks to all who are posting their wonderful stories of how he entered their lives both personally and professionally. These stories show the vast network of caring professionals that he leaves as a legacy in addition to all of the brilliant works that he wrote and which he has also inspired.

My deepest condolences also for his family and loved ones.

Anne McCabe (Saint Louis University)

Adieu to the man I never met but greatly transformed my reasoning in nearly all spheres. My academic life evolves round great exploits by M.A.K. Halliday. I'm sure we will miss you.

Sam Agbeleoba

Sad news, indeed. What a legacy Michael has left, including in his gentleness and good humour.

Thanks to Annabelle and his other good friends for your care and communication.

Alfredo Ferreira

Tributes to Michael Halliday

With his passing, not only have we lost a dear colleague, but also a vocal champion for the increased dialogue between studies in linguistics and other fields, highlighting the need to break out of the imagined frontiers of knowledge. A man whose intellect can only be matched by his warmth towards those who have had the good fortune of meeting him, regardless of their status in their respective fields. A loss that can only be softened by the certainty of a life well lived, with long-lasting significant impact for the understanding of language as a central element in shaping new ways of meaning (and living) in such a fast-changing world. Besides his overwhelmingly significant contribution as a linguist, we are left with unfading gratitude, admiration and encouragement to contribute to language studies from our local experiences in dialogue with the global space of human experience!

Fabio A. S. Bezerra (Universidade Federal da Paraiba)

This is really sad news. For the Chinese SFL & discourse analysis community Michael was not only a great linguist but also a great person, always kind and encouraging. We offer our sincere condolences to Michael's family, friends and those colleagues who were also close to him during his time in the home.

Guowen

It will be very sad to talk about him with my students in the past tense. His work will always project us towards the future.

Arianna Maiorani (Loughborough University, UK)

Sad news indeed, but also time to reflect with great gratitude on our social semiotic debt.

Brad Smith (Macquarie University)

Without Michael, none of us would be here. Or at any rate we wouldn't be doing what we are doing. And as many people have said, Michael was not only a great linguist but also a great person, always kind and encouraging even when one was disagreeing with him.

I'm lucky enough to have known him since 1962, at a time when his 1961 WORD article was revolutionising thinking about grammar. Of course he has followed that up with many further revolutionary insights into language and language study. Linguistics now couldn't be more different from the way it was in the early 1960s. As Monica points out, with her quotation from Ron Carter, words such as 'great', 'influential' are often thrown around. Michael was truly great and truly influential, to the extent of totally changing the discipline in which he was working. And life-changing for those of us who were influenced by his work.

Condolences to his family, and also to Annabelle and his other close friends in Sydney.

Margaret Berry

This is very sad news. I would like to offer condolences to Michael's family and close friends. I was personally fortunate to meet Michael on a few occasions and enjoyed every moment of his company. Like all of us on this list I engage with the remarkable and revolutionary body of work he created and inspired every day. As Margaret said, without Michael we would all be doing other things and it's a good thing we are not. Personally I can't but see language other than through the social semiotic lens that Michael created.

Gerard O'Grady (Cardiff University)

Tributes to Michael Halliday

It's all been said, but I too – indeed all of us SFL-ers here in Bologna – offer sincere condolences to Michael's family, friends and to those colleagues who were also close to him during this time in the home.

35 years ago I by chance came across Language as social semiotic and it was an epiphany. Lise movingly and rightfully writes of gratitude. I am grateful I had the chance to see and hear and discuss with Michael and Ruqaiya fairly often, here in Italy in the '80s and '90s (in Bologna and Trieste), starting with Michael's inspiring plenary on The History of a Sentence at Bologna University's 9th centennial, and later on other occasions – Sydney in 2005, Gorizia in 2006, Cardiff in 2010. The memories are vivid and enduring and I'm grateful for them.

Michael was, in the words of a colleague here today, 'a brilliant man and gentle soul'. His unwavering kindness and encouragement have been commented on already. I too will always be grateful to him for being so with me. He also had a wonderful sense of humour and was great fun to be with.

But as many have also said, he is still with us, through his bountiful splendid work, and shining example, of how to be linguist and also a magnificent human being.

So, in a sense, 'a valediction forbidding mourning'.

Donna R. Miller (University of Bologna)

I would also like to express my gratitude to Michael Halliday for his enormous contribution to us all in the Systemic Functional Linguistics community. Michael Halliday had not only the capacity of opening new ways to think about language, but also of imagining possibilities from a social semiotic perspective to make the world a better place. The impact of his outstanding work has been and will be of great inspiration for many generations of scholars to come. His generous view of language as an ideologically committed form of social action will remain with us – and so will the memories of a brilliant scholar who had also the virtue of being a humble and warm person. Michael's extraordinary example must guide our practices.

Teresa Oteiza (Chair of the International Systemic Functional Linguistics Association (ISFLA), Universidad Catolica de Chile)

Sincerest condolences on the loss of such a great scholar and wonderful person. Michael shall be for ever remembered. I guess all of you have a story to share. I have mine. I was attending Cardiff Summer School in 2010 with a broken leg (an accident that happened a couple of days before my trip). Michael saw me arriving with difficulty to the Julian Hodge Building. He stopped ... and waited ... to help me access the building... So generous...

That was his message when he congratulated us on the foundation of the Tunisian Association of Systemic Functional Linguistics: "We need people like yourselves from around the world because all of the knowledge we get from your experiences as working linguists, theoretical, applied, whichever... is immensely valuable to increase the power and the effectiveness of linguistics as a scientific study of language"

May his soul rest in peace !!!!

Akila Sellami Baklouti (University of Sfax, Tunisia)

Tributes to Michael Halliday

The great linguist, M.A.K. Halliday has died. His work used to be central to the way secondary English teachers treated language as 'language in use', with an emphasis on how language is part of social existence. Some of it got mis-used (I would argue) by the National Literacy Strategy as 'genre' work, though I'm not against a light-handed use of genre as a way of doing writing in schools. He taught my father linguistics, (as I wrote about jokily in 'So They Call You Pisher!') and – to put it crudely – fled the UK, once he realised that the government weren't interested in rational discussion of linguistics as a way of talking about language in schools.

I hope there will be long and thoughtful obituaries to him. We still have much to learn from his work.

Michael Rosen (UK)

And all my condolences.

Maia Ponsonnet (The University of Western Australia)

That is really sad news.

Wang Zhenhua

My sadness at hearing of this loss cannot be expressed in words.

Katina Zammit (Western Sydney University)

I am very sad to hear of Michael's death as I was of Ruqaiya's. He was a great scholar and a kind and noble man. My condolences to the family.

Marilyn Cross

Posted on behalf of Functions of Language's editorial team

It is with great sadness that we have learned that our Honorary Editor M.A.K. Halliday passed away in Sydney on 15 April 2018, aged 93. Halliday is internationally known for developing Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), most conspicuously set out in his seminal *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (first published in 1985; fourth edition 2014). His work occupies a central and unique place in our field. Michael has been our Honorary Editor from the foundation of the journal. In the foreword to the first issue (1994), he sketched out the *raison d'être* of *Functions of Language*, deploring how in much of the linguistics of that time, form was divorced from function, and welcoming the new journal as resisting that trend. Halliday's vision for functional linguistics has inspired the editorial team of *Functions of Language* and many of its contributors since its inception. His work continues to inform numerous articles we receive from around the world. This is not the time or place for a full acknowledgment of the contribution that M.A.K. Halliday has made to our field; an obituary will be published in *Functions of Language* in due course. He was an inspirational and distinguished scholar, an eminent figure in the field, with lasting and enduring impact and immense influence on linguistics internationally. We extend our sympathy to Michael's family and friends. His legacy will live on.

Monika Bednarek, Lobke Ghesquiere, Hilde Hasselgard, Martin Hilpert, J. Lachlan Mackenzie

We are full of grief after hearing this news about Michael. However, the knowledge that he imparted to many will continue to inspire us and others. We pray for comfort to his family and to the many who were close to him.

Board members of JASFL

Tributes to Michael Halliday

For more tributes, please visit the ASFLA website and click on the page:

Vale M.A.K. Halliday

to see the links to a number of official obituaries (see right for examples) and to a collection of Tweets (assembled by Penny Wheeler).

Sorry these links are not active, but this is what you can see on the ASFLA website.

You can read more obituaries that have been published by the wider community at the following links:

[Linguist who changed the way languages are taught: Sydney Morning Herald](#)

[Condolence message from SPELT Pakistan](#)

[M.A.K. Halliday RIP: BAAL](#)

[Obituary for Michael Halliday: University of Sydney](#)

[Vale Michael 'M.A.K' Halliday: PETAA](#)

[Michael Halliday, Linguist: Yorkshire Post, UK](#)

Thank you to all the people who contributed tributes and memories for Michael Halliday.

... and the work continues. Please read on to find out more about the annual ASFLA conference.