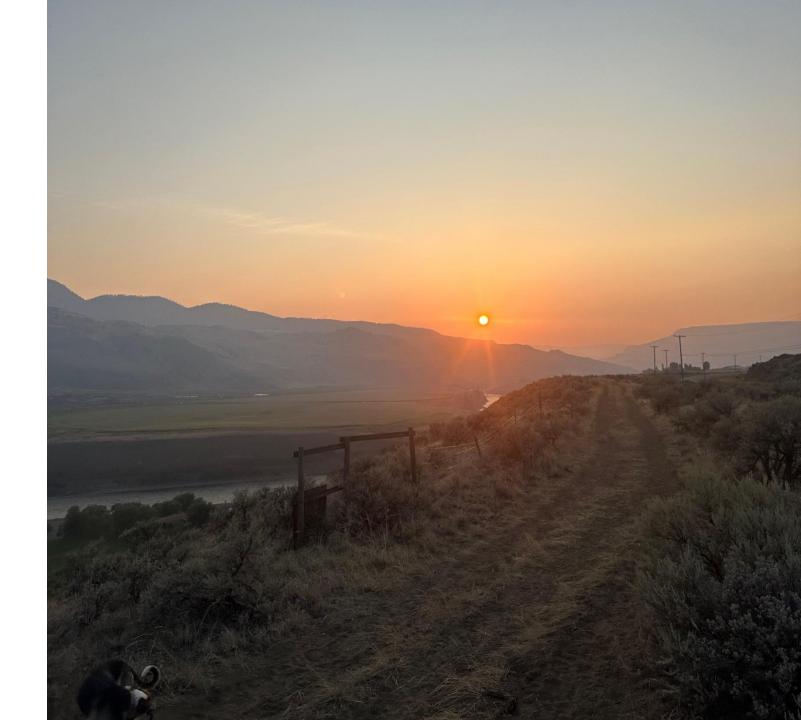


## CMNS 3500 - Language and Power: Clarity, Accessibility and Persuasion in Health Messaging



Territorial Acknowledgement



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01

Recap on Systemic Functional Linguistics 02

Introduction to Ideational Metafunction 03

Guest: Elder Joanne Brown

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Prepare for next week

# Recap on Systemic Functional Linguistics

Developed by M.A.K. Halliday

Views language as a **social semiotic system** 

Focuses on **how language functions in context** to make meaning

### The Three Metafunctions:

<u>Metafunction</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	Example in Health Discourse
Ideational	Representing experience	"There has been a shortage of nurses since 2020"
Interpersonal	Enacting social roles & relationships	"Doctors urge Canadians to get vaccinated."
Textual	Organizing information flow	"First, we outline the symptoms. Then"

### Why SFL Matters in Communications



Helps analyze how meaning is constructed



Reveals bias, power, and perspective in texts



Essential for unpacking media, policy, and public messaging

## "Protesters clashed with police"

### Example:

VS.

"Police confronted protesters"

# Why SFL Matters in Health Messaging



Health communication isn't just about facts—it's about **framing experience** 



Language choices shape:



Public perception of illness



Trust in institutions



Policy support and resistance

# The Ideational Metafunction

- Language as a tool to construe reality
- Answers the question: "What's happening?"
- We look at:
  - Actor
    - Actor, Senser, Carrier, Sayer, etc.
  - Goal
    - Recipient of Process
  - Circumstances
    - Time, place, manner, cause, accompaniment
    - and...

#### Processes

<u>Process</u> <u>Type</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Example</u>
Material	Physical actions/events	"She built a house."
Mental	Thoughts, feelings, perceptions	"He fears rejection."
Relational	States, identity, attributes	"The sky is blue."
Behavioral	Physiological/psychological acts	"She laughed."
Verbal	Communication	"They shouted."
Existential	Existence	"There is a problem."

### Processes

Process Type	Health Example	<u>Implication</u>
Material	"Health Canada approved the drug."	Institutional authority
Mental	"Canadians fear a winter COVID surge."	Emotional framing
Relational	"Mental health is a public priority."	Identity and classification
Verbal	"The Minister stated new measures."	Political communication
Existential	"There is a shortage of nurses."	Crisis framing

# Indigenous Health Access & Ideational Meaning

- Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Inuit, Métis) face systemic barriers to health care access in Canada
- Language in health discourse often:
  - Frames Indigenous communities as passive recipients rather than active agents
  - Uses existential processes to highlight lack ("There is a shortage of services")
  - Employs relational processes to define identity ("Indigenous health is underfunded")
- Ideational choices can either empower or erase Indigenous perspectives

Community-led governance models offer a pathway to equitable healthcare access.

Actor:

Process:

Goal:

Despite the push for cultural competency training, institutional barriers such as a lack of funding, resistance from healthcare providers, and gaps in Indigenous representation within health leadership hinder widespread implementation.

Actor:

Process:

Goal:

While cultural safety training fosters inclusivity within healthcare environments, ensuring Indigenous community control over health services further strengthens autonomy and trust in care delivery.

Actor:

Process:

Goal:

Studies reveal that some healthcare professionals struggle to consistently apply cultural safety principles, reinforcing the need for ongoing education and Indigenous-led guidance.

Actor:

Process:

Goal:

### This week's analytic exercise

- Compare two sentences about Indigenous health care
  - Identify actor, process, goal and circumstances
  - Interpret choices
  - Reflect on impact
- Due Monday, September 15
- Upload to Moodle

