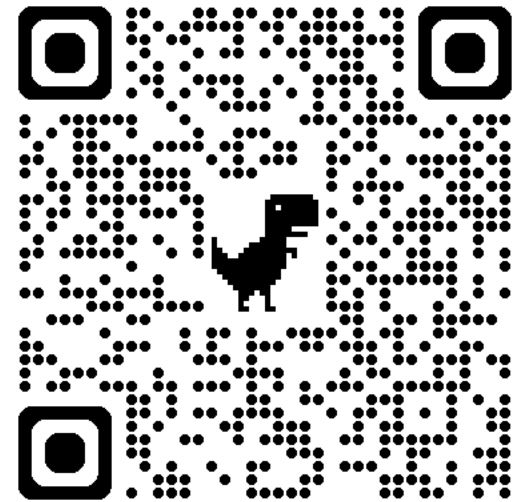


CMNS 3500 - Language and Power: Clarity, Accessibility and Persuasion in Health Messaging

Course Website





Territorial Acknowledgement

Pelltemllik

Where we're going today

01

Recap on SFL
Ideational
Metafunction
Interpersonal
Metafunction

02

Introduction to
Textual
Metafunction

03

Prepare for analytic
exercise 3

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

Bloomberg
Radio

KENVUE INC

<AFTERHOURS>

17.45

▲ 2.89%

**BREAKING
NEWS**

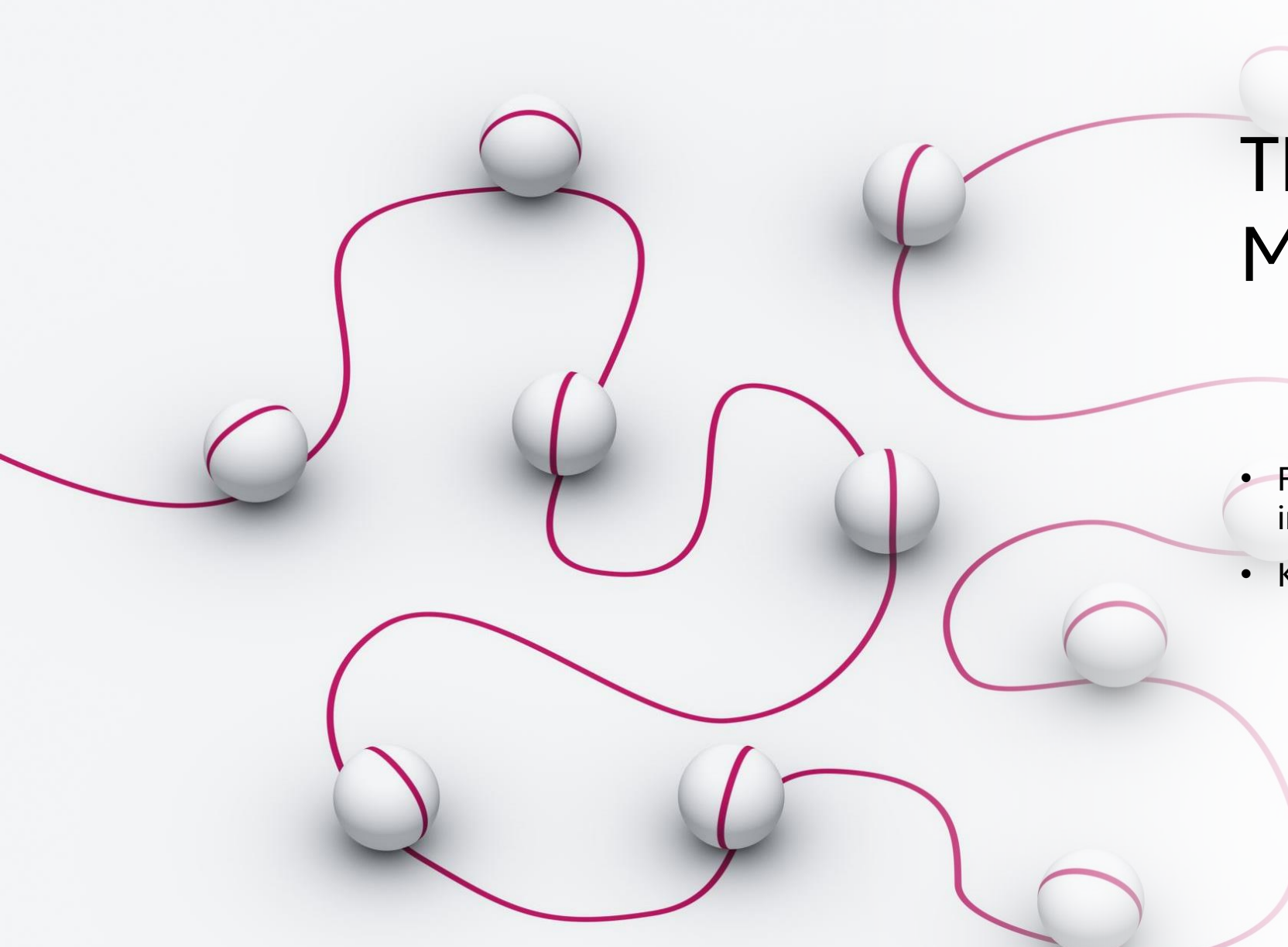
US ADVISES PREGNANT WOMEN TO AVOID
TYLENOL OVER FEARS OF AUTISM

The Ideational Metafunction

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

The Interpersonal Metafunction

- **Mood:** giving information, demanding it, offering something, or requesting something.
- **Modality:** expressing certainty, obligation, or possibility (e.g., "must," "might," "should").
- **Appraisal:** being positive, negative, neutral, or evaluative.
- **Pronouns and Formality:** shaping the relationship between speaker and listener.



The Textual Metafunction

- Focuses on how language organizes information
- Key elements:
 - Theme–Rheme structure
 - Information flow (given vs. new)
 - Information Packaging
 - Cohesion (connectives, reference chains)
 - Omissions and Silencing (whose voices and what actions are missing?)

Why does the textual metafunction matter?

Language structure shapes who speaks, who listens, and whose voice is centered

Controls visibility of actors and actions

Influences trust, compliance, and exclusion



Feature

Power Effect

Theme position

Foregrounds authority or
marginalizes voices

Passive voice

Obscures responsibility

Cohesive devices

Builds legitimacy and logic

Omission

Silences alternative perspectives

Intertextuality

Aligns with dominant discourses

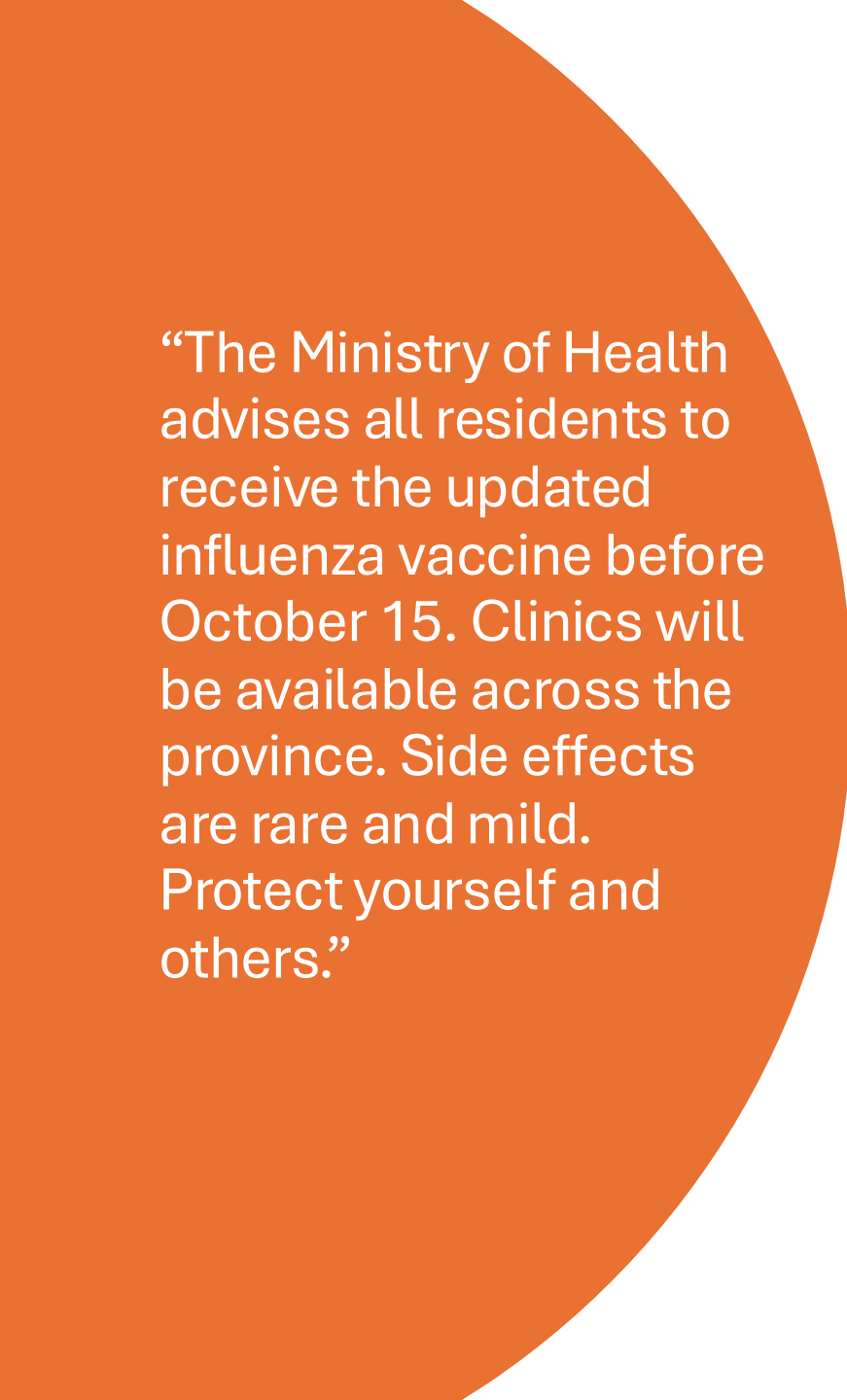


“The Ministry of Health advises all residents to receive the updated influenza vaccine before October 15. Clinics will be available across the province. Side effects are rare and mild. Protect yourself and others.”

Textual Metafunction Analysis

1. Theme-Rheme Structure

- **Theme:** “The Ministry of Health” → foregrounds institutional authority.
- **Rheme:** “advises all residents...” → positions the public as passive recipients of expert guidance.
- This structure reinforces a **top-down power dynamic**, where the government speaks and the public listens.



“The Ministry of Health advises all residents to receive the updated influenza vaccine before October 15. Clinics will be available across the province. Side effects are rare and mild. Protect yourself and others.”

2. Information Packaging

- The message is **compact and directive**, using short sentences and imperative tone (“Protect yourself and others”).
 - This creates a sense of urgency and authority, typical of **risk communication**.
 - The lack of hedging or alternatives suggests **limited space for public negotiation or dissent**.
- 

“The Ministry of Health advises all residents to receive the updated influenza vaccine before October 15. Clinics will be available across the province. Side effects are rare and mild. Protect yourself and others.”

3. Cohesion

- Logical sequencing: advice → availability → reassurance → call to action.
- The phrase “Side effects are rare and mild” uses **reassuring language** to preempt resistance, subtly managing public perception.
- Cohesion here supports **trust-building**, but also **frames the narrative** in favor of compliance.

“The Ministry of Health advises all residents to receive the updated influenza vaccine before October 15. Clinics will be available across the province. Side effects are rare and mild. Protect yourself and others.”

4. Omission and Silencing

- No mention of:
 - Who might be exempt or hesitant.
 - Alternative health perspectives.
 - Community voices or patient experiences.
- This absence **silences dissenting or marginalized views**, reinforcing institutional dominance.

Community-led message

“In our communities, elders have shared concerns about pneumonia risks...”

Analysis:

- Theme:
- Rheme:
- Cohesion:
- Omission and silencing:
- Power:

Message

Vitamin C supports your immune system and help your body heal. Found in citrus fruits, berries, and peppers, it's easy to add to your diet. Make it a daily habit for lasting health benefits.

Analysis:

- Theme:
- Rheme:
- Cohesion:
- Omission and silencing:
- Power:

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Implications for Health Equity

Textual choices can reinforce
or challenge systemic
inequities

Inclusive structuring fosters
trust and engagement

Critical for reaching
marginalized populations

This week's analytic exercise

- Compare the language in two ads about exercise
 - Identify theme, rheme, Information packaging, cohesion, and omission and silencing
 - Interpret choices
 - Reflect on impact
- Due Monday, September 29
- Upload to Moodle



- [Textual Metafunction in Action](#)

