

# Interpreting and Explaining Historical Texts – Is it Possible?<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

With reference to particular problems of interpretations that radio listeners of today are likely to encounter when listening to a Norwegian radio reportage from the 1930s, this article discusses the question of whether it is possible for present-day readers/viewers/listeners or text analysts to understand texts from the past in the way that they were originally meant to be understood. It is argued that we need to gain some kind of access to the contexts that once engendered the texts if we are to arrive at historically acceptable interpretations and explanations of them. The article suggests a solution to the problem of historical text analysis, namely *historical context reconstruction*. This solution is concretised in terms of a specific methodology, which has here been used for research on the formation and first development of the genre system of Norwegian radio. This methodology involves the application of three different text-context models for discourse-analytical purposes:

1. Halliday's structural correlation model
2. The multistratal realisation model developed within social semiotics
3. Goffman's frame model.

**Key Words:** historical text analysis, historical context reconstruction, discourse-analytical methodologies, radio reportage, Norway

## Introduction

Texts are invariably embedded in contexts. Processes of text production and reception rely, not only on "what is in the text", but also on resources "between", "behind" and "beyond" the text elements themselves. Contexts are historically specific. They exist in time and place at a particular "moment" in history. Once gone, they will never exist again. Given these conditions, the question that I shall raise in this article is whether it is possible for present-day readers/viewers/listeners (or text analysts, for that matter) to understand texts from the past in the way that they were originally meant to be understood. The problem is to be illustrated with reference to a particular radio reportage that was broadcast by the NRK in 1935.

Let us imagine that, one morning when turning on your radio, you are met with the following stream of words:<sup>2</sup>

- |       |  |   |
|-------|--|---|
| R1.18 | ((LONG PAUSE)) jernbanen fr- —   | The railway fr- —   |
| R1.19 | den nye bane tar ut fra Neslandsvatn stasjon på Kragerøbanen får jeg si  | The new line starts at Neslandsvatn station on the Kragerø line so to say.  |
| R1.20 | Neslandsvatn stasjon hører selvfølgelig egentlig til Sørlandsbanen men har hittil altså nærmest vært en stasjon på Kragerøbanen  | Neslandsvatn station is actually part of The southern line, but so far it has been a station on the Kragerø line so to speak.   |
| R1.21 | den tar ut fra Neslandsvatn stasjon som ligger i en høyde over havet av toogsytti meter  | It starts at Neslandsvatn station, which is situated at an altitude of 72 meters above sea level.   |
| R1.22 | den går i sydvestlig retning gjennom Kroken en annekst til Drangedal herred i Telemark fylke forbi Brødsjø stasjon stiger oppover Brødsjøheia hvor den passerer fylkesgrensen mellom Telemark og Austagder   | It runs in a south-westward direction through Kroken, an annex of Drangedal community in Telemark county, past Brødsjø station, mounts up Brødsjø hill, where it crosses the county border between Telemark and Austagder.                                    |
| R1.23 | da er den oppe i en høyde av hundreogtreogtredve meter   | Then it has mounted to an altitude of 103 meters.   |
| R1.24 | så synker den igjen i tungt rotete terreng * vil jeg nærmest kalle det * passerer over anleggets to største broer Trollelvviadukten og broen over Gjerstadelven og når Gjerstad stasjon  | Then it descends again through rugged terrain, I think I shall call it, crosses the two largest bridges of the line: the Trollelv viaduct and the bridge over Gjerstad river, and reaches Gjerstad station.   |
| R1.25 | da e- er vi allerede kommet ned i seksogtredve meters høyde over havet   | Then eh- we have descended to an altitude of 36 meters above sea level.   |
| R1.26 | her fra Gjerstad stasjon skal banen få en forbiforbindelse med Risør   | Here at Gjerstad station there is going to be a connection to Risør.  |
| R1.27 | så stiger igjen banen fra Gjerstad stasjon til dels meget sterkt i maksimalstigning og i tungt terreng og går i sydøstlig retning forbi Fonegrenden hvor linjen svinger vestover og passerer Gryttinggrend stoppested på veien innover mot Vegårdsheia | Then the line rises again from Gjerstad station, in parts very steeply and through difficult terrain, and goes in a south-westward direction past Fonegrenden, where the line turns westward and passes Gryttinggrend station on its way towards Vegårdsheia. |
| R1.28 | den passerer Skårstøl kryssingsspor hvor det opprinnelig var planlagt sidelinje til Risør en plan som man har altså latt falle   | It crosses Skårstøl intersection, where the construction of a branch line to Risør was originally planned, a plan that has been dropped.  |
| R1.29 | den fortsetter så i skogsterreng og nokså lempelig terreng også innover i Sønedeled herred som den snerter såvidt innom  | Then it continues through forest terrain, a relatively smooth terrain actually, into Sønederled community, which it only just touches.  |
| R1.30 | og så går den inn i selve Vegårdshei herred til Bjorvatn stasjon   | And then it enters Vegårdshei community and goes on to Bjorvatn station.  |
| R1.31 | i dette øyeblikk stopper toget ved Bjorvatn stasjon  | At this very moment the train stops at Bjorvatn station.  |

Against the rhythmic sounds of a train's travel on joined rails, the radio voice goes on and on with its monotonous commentary about the train's passage through the rugged landscape of Southern Norway – with explicit mentioning of the villages, stations, bridges, tunnels etc that can be seen from the radio reporter's seat by the coach window as the train passes along. Both the voice itself and the technical production of it have the characteristics of a piece of public oratory delivered from a speaker's platform at a public meeting.<sup>3</sup> What sense would you make of this text? Of course, the answer depends on your background knowledge and life experience. My guess is that most Norwegians in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, once they have got over the poor *technical quality* of the recording, would right away sense the *foreignness of the text structure* – a perceived foreignness that is very real, although not as overshadowing as in the case of a meeting with, say, a piece of writing in Sanskrit from the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Since your radio happened to be tuned to NRK's "culture channel" P2 and the programme that was on was Nostalgia, featuring old recordings from NRK's programme archive, the kind of knowledge that you would need if you were to make a *historically correct interpretation* of this text is *historical* knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

### **Exemplifying the Problem of Historical Text Analysis**

Because people normally employ *their own* frames of reference when interpreting texts (and *not* the frames of someone else), few, if any, would be able to read the text cited above in the way that listeners from the original audience in the mid-1930s did. The attraction of such a programme item to present-day listeners does not depend on their ability to make out the historical meaning of the text. To people with a nostalgic hunch or interest in the exotic past of their own culture, a text like this is likely to appear fascinating because of its many connotations of a time that was and never will be again. We immediately recognise that the text is *different* from contemporary radio productions – although it clearly has affinities with certain kinds of modern programmes, for example, live sports reportage. We also appreciate that the difference derives from the fact that the text was originally produced and received within contexts diverging from the ones that frame radio production and consumption today. Speaking of my own anachronistic first meeting with this text, I was particularly puzzled as to what it could have been that had made the text appeal to its original audience. What did *they* make of it? How could such a long tirade of words defend its place on the schedule of a radio channel? Other questions also came up: What kind of text is this? Which genre are we dealing with? Why is the text structured the way it is? What is the speaker doing, really? Why doesn't the text have any clear features of being *meant for* someone? How does the speaker manage to integrate such a large amount of exact information in a text that presents itself as a running commentary relating directly to states, relations and activities unfolding in real time?

#### *Radio Reportage in the Year of 1935 (text samples)*

To return to the imagined Nostalgia programme setting, the bewilderment of Norwegian radio listeners of today does not diminish when a couple of other items from the same radio reportage,<sup>5</sup> get aired. Samples from the relevant texts are as follows:

CONTEXT: transitional passage between two segments of the reportage

R17.7 IER	jeg tror lytterne gjerne vil jeg skal spørre Dem * herr statsminister * om hva de mener om betydningen av å få jernbanen ført frem til målet	I think the listeners would like me to ask you, Mr Prime Minister, what you think the significance is of having the railway completed to its end point.
R18.1 IEE	målet for Sørlandsbanen det er Stavanger	The ultimate end point of the Southern railway is Stavanger.
R18.2	man venter nok på at dette målet skal blitt skal bli nådd	They are probably waiting for this end to be reached.
R18.3	og man synes kanskje det X= gått nokså sent	And perhaps they are thinking that the progress has been slow.
R18.4	og det er visst nokså riktig	And that is certainly largely correct.
R18.5	jeg for min del tror at den fulle og hele betydning av Sørlandsbanen kan man ikke vente å få før man når frem til Stavanger	I for my part think that the full significance of the Southern railway line cannot be realised until one reaches Stavanger.
R18.6	dermed vil – det rike jordbruksdistrikter i Rogaland for eksempel blir satt i forbindelse med la oss si det øvrige land	In that way the rich rural districts in Rogaland, for example, will be connected to the rest of the country.
R18.7	og selve Stavanger vil dermed også komme i en bedre forbindelse med landet forøvrig	And Stavanger itself will thereby also improve its contact with the remainder of the country.
R18.8	jeg tror derfor at den største betydning Sørlandsbanen vil få det er når man først når frem til Rogaland til Stavanger	I therefore think that the greatest significance of the Southern railway will only be seen when one reaches Rogaland and Stavanger.
R19.1 IER	kan der sies noe om når Sørlandsbanen kan bli fullført	Can anything be said about when the Southern railway will be completed?
R20.1 IEE	nei	No.
R20.2	det er vanskelig for meg å uttale meg noe om nu	It is difficult for me to say anything about that now.
R20.3	det det gjelder om det er naturligvis å skaffe de nødvendige bevilgninger	What is important is naturally to secure the necessary financial funding.
R20.4	men som sagt det beror alt sammen på hvor mye penger det kan skaffes til veie til anleggsarbeidet	But, as I said, it all depends on the amount of money that can be raised for the construction.
R74.1/TD	på <u>vår</u> vei gjennom toget . ser <u>vi</u> i en kupé viseformannen i Sørlandsbanens felleskomité oberstløytnant Gundersen fra Kristiansand	on <u>our</u> way through the train . <u>we</u> observe in a compartment the Vice Chairman of the joint committee of the Southern railway line Lieutenant-Colonel Gundersen from Kristiansand
R74.2/TD	denne komité har hatt til oppgave å arbeide for Sørlandsbanens bygging frem til Kristiansand	the task of this committee has been to promote the construction of the Southern railway line to Kristiansand
R74.3/TD	. og det er tydelig å se på oberstløytnantens ansikt at han gleder seg <u>idag</u> over at den er kommet et langt steg videre frem mot det mål komitéen har arbeidet for nu gjennom en årrekke	. and it is obvious from the Lieutenant-Colonel's face that he is rejoicing <u>today</u> over the fact that it [the railway line] has taken a large step towards the goal that the committee has been working for for years

R74.4/TD	. han har heller ikke hatt noe imot å uttale seg overfor . <u>lytterne</u> om banens betydning for distriktene	. he has had nothing against making a statement for the benefit of <u>the listeners</u> about the significance of the line for the districts
R74.5/TD	værsgod	please go ahead
R74.6/TD	oberstløytnant	Lieutenant-Colonel
R75.1/G	såvidt <u>jeg</u> forstår så vil andre uttale seg om banens historikk og dens kostende med videre	as far as <u>I</u> have understood others are going to talk about the line's history its costs etcetera
R75.2	det man ønsker at <u>jeg</u> skal uttale meg om <u>idag</u> det er om de fordeler som <u>jeg</u> mener Sørlandsbanen vil skaffe sitt-sine distrikter	what <u>I</u> am expected to speak about <u>today</u> are the advantages that <u>I</u> think the Southern railway line will bring about for its- ((GRAMMATICAL ERROR)) its districts
R75.3	<u>jeg</u> skal da i korthet nevne følgende	<u>I</u> shall then mention the following
	((OMISSION OF ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF TALK))	
R75.29	<u>jeg</u> vil her etter hukommelsen sitere en- – noen uttalelser av tidligere stortingspresident statsråd <X Aars X>	<u>I</u> shall here from memory cite a- – some statements by the former President of Parliament Minister <X Aars X>
R75.30	en arbeidssom og vindskeblig befolkning har her på Sørlandet allerede skapt eiendommer og verdier som må avtvinge hvem som helst den største respekt	the hard-working and conscientious population here in South Norway has already created properties and values which must command anybody's greatest respect
R75.31	fordi Sørlandet fra naturens hånd er så velsignet godt og fordi folkerasen er så inderlig flittig og hjertens tålmodig har landsdelen tross manglende kommunikasjoner allikevel evnet å holde seg oppe X	because nature has generously endowed Southern Norway and because the people are so sincerely conscientious and so marvellously patient the region has managed to do well despite the lack of communications
R75.32	og ikke det alene	and not only that
R75.33	men den har maktet med glans å klare konkurransen med de øvrige landsdeler	but it has been brilliantly successful in the competition with the other regions
R75.34	... <u>idag</u> er <u>vi</u> atter vidne til at den del av Sørlandets gamle ønske og håp en ny avdeling av Sørlandets store drøm gå i oppfyllelse	... <u>today</u> <u>we</u> are once more witnessing that part of the old dream and hope of Southern Norway is being fulfilled
R75.35	derfor er der <u>i dag</u> jubel og glede overalt på Sørlandet og da ikke minst i den skjønne og stolte .e. by ved de fagre Tromøy og XXsund Arendal Sørlandsbanens foreløpige vestligste endepunkt	therefore people all over Southern Norway are rejoicing today and especially in the beautiful and noble .e. village at the lovely Tromøy and Xxsund, so far the westernmost point of the Southern railway
R75.36	<u>vi</u> Sørlandsfolk hilser vår jernbane <u>i dag</u> hjertelig velkommen idet vi hertil knytter vårt inderlige ønske om at banens videre fortsettelse og fullførelse må skje snarest mulig	<u>we</u> Southerners heartily welcome our railway today and express our sincere wish that the continuation and completion of the railway might take place as soon as possible
R75.37	ti først når Sørlandsbanen gjennomløper hele det sydlige Norge	for it is not until the Southern railway traverses the whole southern region of

	og med sine bundsforvante bilrytterne de moderne <X stilinjer X> knytter Sørlandets byer (/BYE/) og bygder sammen til et hele først da vil Sørlandsbanen bli det forventede bli-til den forventede gagn og oppsving . for såvel landsdelen som vi også tror tillige for det hele land	Norway and with carriers the modern <X lines X> connect the towns and districts of Southern Norway to form a whole that the Southern railway will become the expected benefit and growth for both the region and we believe also for the whole country
R75.38	da vil Sørlandsbanen skape et større Norge som statsråd Oftedal så vakkert og treffende uttrykte det i en artikkel herom i nittenhundreognitten	then the Southern railway will create a greater Norway as Minister Oftedal so beautifully and appropriately expressed it in an article on this topic in 1919
R75.39	og jeg vil tillate meg i denne stund å tilføye et samtidig ennu mere velsignet og derigjennom et ennu lykkeligere Norge	and I shall admit myself on this occasion to add: an even more blessed and consequently an even happier Norway

### *The “Foreignness” of the 1935 Reportage*

The sample indexed R17.7 (ff) is taken from a text that we ostensibly recognise as an interview, but a very weird one it is to modern ears. The conduct of both of the participants, the reporter/interviewer *and* the interviewee, is utterly constrained by manuscript dependency and by previous rehearsal. The “questions” (or rather: response-eliciting turns) are as polite and open as can be – allowing the interviewee to fill in pieces of information of his own choice. The answers are ever so long and wordy – there is obviously no need to rush in order to get in the final word before the next programme item is scheduled to be on. The interviewee is allowed to deliver his turns, which have evidently been scripted ahead of time, without fear of being interrupted by unforeseen follow-up questions. The interviewer obviously feels the situation to require of him that he explain his capacity of speaking on behalf of a third party, which he refers to as “the listeners”. To present-day radio consumers, who are used to being constantly drawn into the discourse by the radio presenter’s frequent *you*-addresses (as well as by his questions, instructions, side-remarks etc.), the most alien trait about this text is perhaps the very circumspect appreciation of the existence of an overhearing third party in the communicative event that is encoded in this third-person reference term that is syntactically integrated in a sentence addressed at the interviewee.

Let us look at the text excerpt starting with the index marker R74.1. This sample falls into two parts identifiable generically as (1) continuity talk performing the job of introducing the next speaker, and (2) a formal speech. As with the previous samples, it is probably the stiffness of the participants’ demeanour and the slow pace with which they conduct their interactional affairs that would strike present-day radio listeners as the most exotic features of this passage. The slow monotonous reading prosody, the occasional reading mistake, the paper-rustling syntax, the exceedingly circumstantial style of the text, all of this makes it evident that the spoken delivery is totally dependent on a word-by-word manuscript – a fact which is likely to make radio listeners of today characterise the text as artificial, affected and contrived.

Radio listeners of our times are immediately faced with a veritable problem of interpretation: Who is it that the reporter is referring to as *we* in first unit of the sample (R74.1)? Of course, it may be that our listeners do not even notice that this *we* repre-

sents a problem – in automatically interpreting the *we* in accordance with a widespread current practice of radio talk as an instance of the inclusive *we* referring jointly to the two parties in the communicative event, i.e. to the reporter and the listeners. The implication of such a reading would be that what the reporter is doing here is virtually to take the listener by the hand and lead her through the aisle of the railway wagon. Now, in many languages, Norwegian included, the word *we* is actually polysemous with two distinct meanings, which can be rendered as “we-inclusive-of-addressee” and “we-exclusive-of-addressee” respectively. In the “we-exclusive-of-addressee” sense, the pronoun encodes a reference to a *representative* of a party that consists of more than one individual. In many contexts, tokens of *we* are instantly recognizable as either one of the two lexical items. In other contexts, ambiguities, intended or not, may arise. If it is so that the reporter in the current programme extract is using the “we-exclusive-of-addressee”, what kind of party is it that he is talking on behalf of? Who, beside himself, is he referring to? Is he using only *one* of the two *we*’s or is the reference ambiguous? As with all deictic expressions, the answer does not reside in the text, but rather in the context – in the *historical* context, to be precise – which existed in 1935.

Although the remainder part of the sentence is semantically simpler, radio listeners of today may still raise an eyebrow when learning that *we* by coincidence, so it appears from the reporter’s choice of words, happen to spot “the Vice chairman of the joint committee of the Southern railway line, Lieutenant Colonel Gundersen from Kristiansand”, who is sitting in a compartment. The disagreement between the reporter’s representation of what is happening and the evidently pre-planned nature of the course of actions is bound to make our time traveller experience the reporting as inauthentic. The expression by which the coming speaker Gundersen is referred to for the first time may also produce a reaction. Whereas views are likely to vary as regards the use of Gundersen’s military title in this context, radio listeners of today would undoubtedly find the information about Gundersen’s role in the mentioned committee and his geographical affiliation with Southern Norway to be relevant to his coming business of stating his opinion on “the significance of the line for the districts”. Hence, it is probably not the many pieces of information building up Gundersen’s authority *per se* that are felt to be at odds with the dominating norm of modern radio talk. Rather, it is *the grammar* – the tight integration of information in exact words and expanded nominal groups – that stands out as marked to present-day listeners, although this style, which originally derives from academic and bureaucratic writing, certainly still exists on “traditional” broadcasting channels as a variety of continuity talk.

If listeners of today were to decide on a *single* linguistic construction that could function as an indicator of the old idiom of broadcast talk, my guess is that they would pick “the listeners”<sup>6</sup> occurring in the kind of declarative syntactic-pragmatic context that segment R74.4 is an instance of. What kind of situation is it that a radio presenter encodes when talking *to* (or *about*?) the intended recipients of the broadcast using this half-way third-person-mention/ half-way address form? The answer rings when we identify the third person description used for referring to a party in the communicative event as a stock member of the language of traditional genres of public speech such as the lecture, the sermon, the political speech, the ceremonial address, and the enlightenment talk.

One of the places where the stiffness and the explicitness in the radio speakers’ behaviour come through is in the way they carry out changes in the speaker role. The reporter actually uses a separate turn addressed at Gundersen for handing over the word and the microphone. It is as if he does not trust the broadcasting audience to understand

what is taking place without being explicitly told – perhaps because of the lacking visual input? Of course, both the choice of participant reference terms and the speaker switching procedure form part of the radio speakers' methods for coping with the complicated broadcasting situation with its special configurations of time, space and participants.

Once given the word, Gundersen is allowed to keep it for as much as 6 minutes – an “eternity” to someone used to the short and varied items that make up the output on most radio channels today. Talking of variation, the out-of-date group of listeners put on stage for the current experiment are bound to be wondering at this stage where all the music has gone ...

Back to Gundersen's monologue. His voice is unmistakably the voice of an elderly man.<sup>7</sup> Both his style and the linguistic norm that he uses are likely to make our time traveller hesitate. To take his linguistic norm first, Gundersen speaks “Riksmål” (the traditional Dano-Norwegian standard) with a southerner's accent in a version dating from the turn of the century, which will be heard as oddly antiquated by present-day speakers of Norwegian. Except for the occasional reading mistake, his language is impeccably correct. The style is formal, not to say dignified, befitting the representational public role that the Lieutenant Colonel is enacting. The language is verbose and ornamented, brimming with rhetorical figures of speech like anaphora<sup>8</sup> and coordinated pleonastic-formulaic epithets of the type *void and empty*.

An educated person familiar with the traditional forms of public speaking that have existed in the Western culture for millennia will immediately recognise the genre that Gundersen is giving vent to – or rather, the *genres*. For his monologue falls into two distinct parts, which are structured according to different generic norms. In the first part of his speech, extending to segment R75.28, Gundersen gives a *talk*<sup>9</sup> in the popular enlightenment spirit about the advantages that the Southern railway line is expected to produce for the districts that it passes through. In other words, he acts in accordance with the mandate that he had just been given by the reporter. He apparently transgresses that mandate, however, when going on to praise the population of Southern Norway, to describe the region's characteristics (using the words of a former Minister), and to direct an apostrophic greeting of welcome at the Southern railway (!), before he closes his address with a citation by a different Minister on the anticipated effects of the new railway for Norway as a whole. Generically, this part of Gundersen's monologue is a *celebration speech* with traits both from the inaugural address and from the oration of tribute.

Even if the generic structures in use are likely to be known to present-day radio consumers, there is something in the situation that does not add up when judged by modern standards of broadcasting, at least not for the celebration speech. Now, formal speeches relating to specific occasions like the speech that Gundersen is voicing may of course be heard on the radio today also. But then the situation invariably is that the speech is being mediated from a “real-life” event of public speaking comprising an audience other than the radio listeners – a traditional audience, that is, who is sharing time and place with the speaker. Why did the programme makers in the mid-1930s choose a different solution with a *direct rapport* between the speaker and the radio listeners? What did this solution mean? Again, if the answer is to be found somewhere, it is in the original context.

As we have seen, there are many factors that contribute to the feeling of alienation that Gundersen's talk is likely to produce in us as habitual consumers of broadcasts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in case we eavesdrop on his long-dead words preserved by “stone age” recording technology (and transferred back to paper, as it were, for the present analytical

experiment). The strongest contributory factor is perhaps the fact that *he speaks to his listeners as members of a collective and distant audience – not as individual persons*. Actually, he barely speaks to his audience at all to judge by the way he carefully avoids addressing the recipient party in explicit terms. During his entire monologue, he refers to them *only once*. To add to the effect of circumspection, that reference does not appear in the initial part of the talk as the standing genre expectations would have required it do, preferably in the form of a summons (“Dear listeners!”). Rather, it is tucked away well into the talk in the sentence “I shall only bring into the memory of *my listeners* that ...” (R75.10).<sup>10</sup> The grammatical construction is as good as identical to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person “mention-address” form that was commented upon above. The question is what sense this form made to its original users in the mid-1930s. What reasons did a speaker like Gundersen have for choosing this particular form and placing it in such a belated position? There is no way of telling without inspecting the original contexts of radio talk in the 1930s, but is that feasible?

As for the other enunciative motions that Gundersen takes for anchoring his utterance in the coordinates of the speech event, they will probably be familiar to present-day members of Norwegian culture, since they are wholly in keeping with the genre conventions of public speaking that still exist. Gundersen marks himself as the deictic centre of the speech event by dropping a couple of pronominal self-references in the first few sentences. He also refers to himself by a sentence-initial *I* a bit further on in his talk in the sentence that contains a mentioning of the listeners (R75.10). Apart from the few references to the participants, Gundersen is entirely occupied with the informational topic of the talk in the first part of his monologue. The type of *I* that he is staging agrees with the norms of public oratory of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is a patently de-personalised *I* who is speaking solely in capacity of the authority and representational role with which he was called to the microphone by the reporter in the introductory continuity-talk passage. Incidentally, this is a very different *I* than the one that radio listeners of today are used to hearing in the monologue format that dominates on contemporary radio, the radio disc jockey talk (by which *I* in this context mean both the DJ-talk proper and the various forms of more traditional radio talk practices that the DJ-style has spread to). Gundersen’s *I* is as far as can be from the cautiously individualised studio hosts of today who, as part of their set repertoire of discursive routines, keep chatting about trivial facts from their own private lives. Gundersen, on his part, is consciously “doing being public”, as Scannell so succinctly has put it (Scannell 1996).

As we have seen already, Gundersen’s monologue distinctly changes character midway – i.e., between macrosyntagm R75.28 and macrosyntagm R75.29 in the transcript. Against the backdrop of the generally relaxed style of contemporary radio talk, the latter part of Gundersen’s monologue is bound to stand out as stylistically high-strung to modern radio listeners. The content is dressed up in a grand rhetorical style suitable for ceremonies and great achievements. The means of persuasion are not primarily *logos* ones, as in the first part of his speech, but rather emotional arguments of *pathos*. The speaker no longer makes do with his own authority. He *also* borrows the authority of other great men – more specifically, that of two former members of Parliament – by uttering longish quotations at the opening and closing of the celebration-speech passage. When it comes to the unmistakable nationalistic overtones of this passage, anachronistic interpretations will certainly arise unless one consciously tries to bracket the ideologies of our own time and put into play those of the years between the wars – to the extent that such a scheme is possible.

The pronouns *we* and *our* represent problems of interpretation in Gundersen's speech just as they did in the reporter's, although the tokens in R75.34 are fairly transparent since the speaker takes care to specify them referentially with the noun *southerners* (Norw. *sørlandsfolk*). To determine the reference of the *we* in R75.34, however, is not that simple. The text gives two clues: (1) the generic affiliation of the text, and (2) the *we*-token's location immediately after the citation of the words of a parliamentary representative. The decisive clue to the interpretation, however, resides in the ideological climate that existed in the period between the wars.

As we have seen, Gundersen carefully fixes the speech event deictically in his own presence. He actually does so with the celebration-speech part also, not only with the talk part that was commented on above (see the *I*'s in R75.29 and R75.37). In the celebration-speech part, he also makes abundant references to the time coordinate of the speech event using the present tense and as many instances of the adverbs *today* and *in this moment* as the syntax allows him to integrate in the relatively few sentences that are of his own making. Of course, this insistence on the historical moment belongs to the conventions of the celebration speech. Today, a contingency of this focus on the present moment – that communicating parties who are separated in space still share the same *now* – is a fully naturalised part of the broadcasting situation. The challenge for the analyst attempting to read Gundersen's text *historically* is to make out the original intentions and effects involved in the encoding of this configuration of time, space and participants. It is fairly evident that the original implication of this situation differs from the one that we put into it today. As a first verification of this claim, let me present the opening passage of the reportage, in drawing the reader's attention to the careful description of the origo of the speech event with explicit mentioning of time, place and both communicating parties, as well as technical details about the transmission process:

- |      |  |  |
|------|--|--|
| R1.1 | mikrofonen . er . <u>i dag</u> . med et stort utstyr . plassert i åpningstoget . på . Sørlandsbanens parsell Neslandsvatn . Nelaug   | Today . the microphone and other heavy equipment have been placed on board the opening train travelling the Southern railway line between Neslandsvatn and Nelaug.           |
| R1.2 | ... <u>vi</u> har nu . overføring ... ved hjelp av kortbølgesender . fra toget . til mottager på Vegårdsheia ... og derfra på linje til kringkasterne<br><P (THROAT CLEARING) P> | We are now having a transmission with the help of a short-wave transmitter from the train to a receiver on Vegårdsheia and thence by wire to the broadcasters.               |
| R1.3 | ... (3,3) forhåpentlig . vil dette ... tekniske eksperiment lykkes   | Hopefully, this technical experiment will be successful.   |
| R1.4 | . og <u>vi</u> skal kunne gi <u>Dem</u> . inntrykk . fra denne høytidelige begivenhet . som virkelig <u>her nede vi sitter</u> <EMP e=r EMP> . en begivenhet                     | And <u>we</u> shall be able to give <u>you</u> ((SG V-FORM)) impressions from this ceremonious occasion which really <u>down here where we are</u> <EMP is EMP> an occasion. |
| R1.5 | åpningen . av den seksti kilometer lange . nye jernbane . fra Neslandsvatn til Nelaug  | The opening of the 60-kilometre-long new railway line from Neslandsvatn to Nelaug.   |

## Looking Into the Problem

### *Text Analysis and the Need for Context Knowledge*

Texts can only be described, interpreted and explained with reference to their contexts. When people make sense of texts, either as producers or interpreters, they invariably base their meaning-making on two or three factors: (1) the text and (2) the context of which the text is a part, *including* (3) their own cognitive resources. Interpretation processes are basically the same whether performed by discourse participants *or* by text analysts, despite differences in procedures. The implication of this insight from a text-analytical perspective is that analysts need access, not only to the particular texts under scrutiny, but also to the contexts that engendered them, if they are to arrive at valid interpretations and explanations of the texts.<sup>11</sup>

Since the interpreter herself is one of the factors that settle the meaning of a text and since it is principally impossible *from an external perspective* to determine the amount of input coming from this party, a disconcerting first conclusion to draw from the insight into interpretation processes just presented is that other people's texts are inaccessible for analysis. As the reader will know, text or discourse analysis has a strong position within Academia today – a fact that in itself indicates that solutions to the problem must exist. Whether explicitly stated or not, the solution that most text-analytical traditions bring into play is to aim at uncovering and describing the underlying rules, conventions or norms that guide text production and interpretation within a given speech community, rather than the absolute values of specific encodings and decodings.<sup>12</sup>

### *Learning to Know Contexts of One's Own Time*

How, then, do text analysts gain access to the norms or conventions that underpin (groups of) specific texts – as well as to the contexts, or rather context *types*, that the text norms under study belong to? In a much-used textbook on genre analysis, which focuses on the use of language in professional settings, V.K. Bathia recommends the following procedure:

First, one needs to place the genre-text (i.e., a typical representative example of the genre) intuitively in a situational context by looking at one's prior experience, the internal clues in the text and the encyclopaedic knowledge of the world that one already has. This will include the writer's previous experience and background knowledge of the specialist discipline as well as that of the communicative conventions typically associated with it. The background knowledge of the discipline one gets from his/her association with, and training within, the professional community, whereas the knowledge of the communicative conventions one gets from his/her prior experience of similar texts. *The user, therefore, gets the explanation of why the genre is conventionally written the way it is, from his or her understanding of the procedures used in the area of activity to which the genre belongs* [my emphasis]. This kind of knowledge is greater in those people who professionally belong to the speech community which habitually makes use of that genre (Bhatia 1993:22).

The procedure suggested by Bhatia, which crucially involves applying the genre competence and familiarity with the situational context that one is assumed to have gained from prior experience with similar texts, is no doubt good advice for genre analysts studying genre-texts of their own time and culture. However, as I demonstrated above

by identifying a number of interpretation problems that a radio listener in 2002 is likely to face when encountering what are actually *essentially foreign* radio texts from 1935, Bhatia's scheme will not do the job if applied to texts and genres that existed in bygone contexts of time. When dealing with historical texts, the method described by Bhatia only defends its place as an analytical point of departure, I shall claim. As a *first approach* to a text universe of an earlier period, however, the method undoubtedly *has* a function, since it is intrinsically human to begin looking at "alien objects" with one's own frames of reference – only to discover that they do not do, at least not just like that.

### *Learning to Know Contexts of Former Times*

What methods, then, are available for analysts seeking to interpret and explain textually coded meanings from earlier periods if they are interested, *not* in the sense that people of their own time and culture make of the text(s), but rather in how the text(s) worked for people at the time? To interpret historical texts and to explain them are two related, yet different, research objectives. Because of their differences, it is likely that the two kinds of research purposes require somewhat different methods. Let us therefore consider the methodical question in relation to the two research objectives separately.

As to historical text *interpretation*, it was established in the preceding chapter that analysts are normally not interested in specific readings by specific readers, but rather in the underlying text norm that generates the readings. The question, then, is whether it is possible to acquire competence in text norms or "discursive grammars" that specify – for speech communities that no longer exist – what people in the past were expected to say in which situations and in which ways. The methodical recommendation that genre analysts and historians with an interest in text history generally give is that one should *read extensively and attentively*. Given that the analyst is exposed to an adequate number of texts belonging to the target norm, she should be able to neutralise her own first reactions to the texts and replace the reactions by an understanding of the norm that resembles the competence of its original users, what Inez Ruppel has called a "reactive-mimetic understanding" as opposed to the "functional understanding" that competent real-time speech community members once possessed (Ruppel 2002:11).

Of course, extensive reading (or listening or viewing, depending on the medium) is nothing but the best possible substitute for the unsurpassed genre-learning situation of all times – the situation where learners are allowed to experience large amounts of performance inside the relevant speech community and given the chance to interact directly with skilled performers, a situation that for obvious reasons is an impossibility for learners of out-dated norms.

Analysts of genre apply a special kind of inference process when reading/listening/viewing attentively – namely, *abduction*. With norms as research objects, there exists a semiotic relation of instantiation between the research object and the observed data or texts. Abduction is an interpretative inference procedure whereby the researcher posits hypotheses about the functions and structures of the norm under scrutiny, and then tests the hypotheses informally against actual texts held to have been generated by the norm in the first place. This procedure must be kept distinct from inference procedures characterised by other kinds of relations between phenomena and explanations such as induction, deduction and empirical-analytical description (Berge 1993:88ff).<sup>13</sup>

One might ask whether this method of reading extensively and attentively is sufficient for extracting the historical meaning of texts. The answer is "not quite", as already in-

dicated in the preceding chapter. Since it is largely the world outside the text that provides it with reference, examining a historical text without prior knowledge of the world that it refers to is likely to go amiss at certain points. Take for example politically or religiously subversive texts that use non-literal ways of meaning like irony, allegory and periphrasis for reasons of censorship or threats of persecution. In such cases, knowledge about the society that engendered the texts is indispensable for determining the original meaning of the text (confer Kjeldstadli 1999: 184ff). Of course, if analysts follow the methodical recommendation and read *large enough* amounts of texts, they may manage to recover much of the needed encyclopaedic knowledge from clues in the texts themselves, since texts invariably contain indices of their original contexts. Still, it will normally be both more efficient and more reliable to exploit other kinds of historical sources for this part of the context reconstruction.

As a matter of fact, this is exactly what Bhatia suggests in the continuation to the paragraph quoted above:

For people *who do not belong to the relevant speech community* [my emphasis], this kind of knowledge [knowledge in genre conventions and their situated use, that is] is usually acquired by surveying available literature (loc cit).

Bhatia then goes on to list various types of sources that a researcher may consult in order to acquire the missing knowledge. There is much more to say about methods and methodologies. For the purpose of the current argument, the point is that discourse analysts aiming at determining the historical specificity of texts from the past need *to reconstruct, not only the norm(s) of which the studied text(s) are instantiations, but also the contextual frames within which the texts were originally produced and received.*

Without knowledge about the physical and social world that originally conditioned the production of the text and that the text points to *and* expresses, analysts will have unsolvable problems encircling the pool of significations that the text had the possibility of generating in members of the relevant speech community in the past – as we saw in the case of our imagined radio listeners who, equipped with cognitive schemata of today, were trying to determine the meaning of radio programmes from the 1930s. On the most elemental level, context-ignorant time or culture travellers may fail to identify the invoked referents in the text-external world that the text is referring to. Interpreters may also fail to grasp the full denotations of words and grammatical constructions that have either changed meaning or gone (more or less) out of use since the text was produced.<sup>14</sup> On the level of higher-order meanings, historically misaligned interpreters are likely to miss or misunderstand the situational, cultural and ideological implications of the text. Furthermore, time travellers will have difficulties understanding the reasons why the text is structured the way it is, as well as why it is doing what it is doing. At worst, negligence of contextual factors may lead analysts to commit blatant anachronisms, e.g., to take certain features in a text at face value by the standards of their own time without realising this, to claim that a text is doing something that it could not possibly have done at the time of its production, or to misleadingly take certain features in the text to be the result of entities or relations that simply did not exist in the period of the text's production.<sup>15</sup>

Now, what if the research objective is *not only* to interpret a particular text or group of texts, but also *to explain* it or them? Actually, by reconstructing the underlying genre norm, a researcher will *de facto* also provide much of an explanation of the text or group of texts. If the research objective also extends to *explaining the formation and evolution of that norm*, however, it becomes absolutely mandatory to reconstruct the historical

context within which the norm originally evolved. In other words, it is if one aims at fully answering the kind of *why*-questions that I posed in the first two sections of this article when staging an anachronistic meeting between radio listeners of today and radio texts from 1935.

### **The Answer: Historical Context Reconstruction**

The conclusion to be drawn from the argumentation above is that historical text analysis, which amounts to the reconstruction of text norms from former times, actually presupposes another reconstructive endeavour – namely, *historical context reconstruction*. If the analytical goal is not restricted to interpretation but also includes explanation of historical texts and genres, context reconstruction is an absolute necessity, since genres are invariably formed in response to pragmatic forces in the context (Vagle 2002).

Having reached that conclusion, we are faced with new questions. How should such a research objective be formulated more precisely? What kind of approach should be used in pursuing it? In other words, which methods and methodologies are likely to produce context reconstructions that will enable people of today to make historically acceptable interpretations of historical texts, while also allowing text analysts to explain the functions and structures of the texts? Naturally, the answers to these questions depend on the empirical text universe in question, as well as on the available historical sources. Like most research objectives within the humanities and social sciences, they also vary with the analyst's theoretical aims and preferences. Rather than trying to create a universal solution, I shall therefore sketch the solution that I have come up with for the purpose of my own research on the early text history of Norwegian radio.

As for the research objective, I have stated it in the following way:

- *To reconstruct the changing contextual frames within which the discursive practices of Norwegian radio were embedded in the 1920s and 1930s.*

The reason why the research objective should be defined in dynamic terms is that every context *is* dynamic and the result so far of a previous evolution. *Contexts are evolutionary in nature*. This insight implies a particular model of explanation, namely the temporal or processual one, which sees every action, happening or event situated at a particular point in time as the outcome of sequence(s) of processes ahead of it. Methodically, the insight gives preference to a *diachronic* approach, which combines historical techniques for producing chronological accounts of complex historical processes with a “reconstructing empirical-explicative method”.<sup>16</sup> Like all kinds of historical research, the basic methodical procedure is to read, view and/or listen to historical sources dealing with the targeted empirical phenomena.<sup>17</sup>

I have chosen to define the research problem using the complicating specification “contextual frames” rather than the more straightforward descriptions *contexts* or *context types*. There are at least two reasons for this decision. *One* is that the eventual context reconstruction is meant to function in relation to a whole universe of texts and genres rather than in relation to a particular text or genre. This calls for a level of generalisation attainable only through some sort of abstraction away from concrete contexts and context types.

The other reason is linked to the theoretical perspectives from which the analysis was to be carried out. Chronology invariably provides first clues to the nature of the relationships holding between historical states, events and processes. Still, it cannot do the

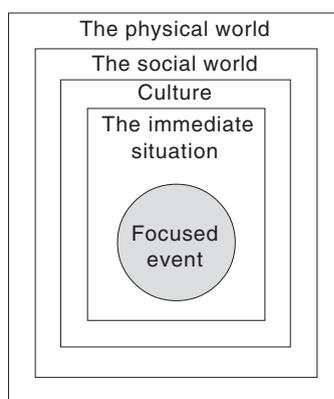
job of bringing order to the observations and relating them to each other. For this purpose, theoretical perspectives are also needed. For reasons to which I shall return, I found it necessary to combine three different, yet compatible, discourse-analytical perspectives in order to enable the upcoming context reconstruction to support the interpretation, as well as the explanation, of Norwegian radio texts from the interwar years. While a historical approach based on chronology invariably invokes a processual model of explanation, the selected theoretical perspectives suggest factorial-exploratory models, as well as causal, consequential, circumstantial and semiotic ones.

Let us take a closer look at the three perspectives, starting by listing them with some information on their origins:

4. Goffman's laminated frame model (Goffman 1986 [1974]).
5. Halliday's structural correlation model (Halliday 1990).
6. The multistratal realisation model developed within the sociosemiotic tradition (Barthes 1969, Ventola 1987, Martin 1992, Matthiessen 1993).

The tenet of Goffman's frame model is that text (or *talk*, to use his term) should be analysed "from the outside in" – beginning with the ultimate determinant of the frame's physical rim. The notion of the frame's rim refers to his well-known metaphorical perception of the structural constraints conditioning social activities as a multi-layered frame – in my visualisation something like this:

**Figure 1.** *Focused Event Surrounded by Laminated Frame*



As can be seen from the figure, Goffman's context model recognises that actual contexts surrounding social practices are complex with both physical and normative dimensions. Contexts are seen as frames with embedded laminations representing the different macro-factors that shape and constrain the social activities going on inside them. The model is deterministic. Yet, it represents determination as a stepwise process with each factor delimiting the possibilities on the lamination inside it. By maintaining that, in the last resort, the grounding factor (or, in Goffman's wording, the "rim" of the frame) is the physical and biological world, the theory anchors the realms of social life in the natural order (Goffman 1986: 247ff). When applied to empirical questions implying diachronicity, I suggest that the model should be enhanced with a third dimension representing time. For reasons to do with the nature of broadcasting situations, I have also

found it revealing to split the “rim” of the frame in two, so as to expose the ways in which the special configurations of time, space and participants ultimately depend on natural, economic and technological resources (see Figure 4 further down).

The two other perspectives, or text-context models, are part of the same theory: the sociosemiotic theory of language, discourse and society.<sup>18</sup> The overarching explanatory goal of the theory is to spell out the relations between social structure and the variation in semiotic practices. Like Goffman’s model, the structural correlation model is basically a determination model. It understands the text-context relation as one of determination.<sup>19</sup> The multistratal realisation model, on the other hand, is an “expression model”, which interprets the text-context relation semiotically in terms of expression. In other words, it is a social-constructionist philosophy, according to which the social system is articulated through social practices.

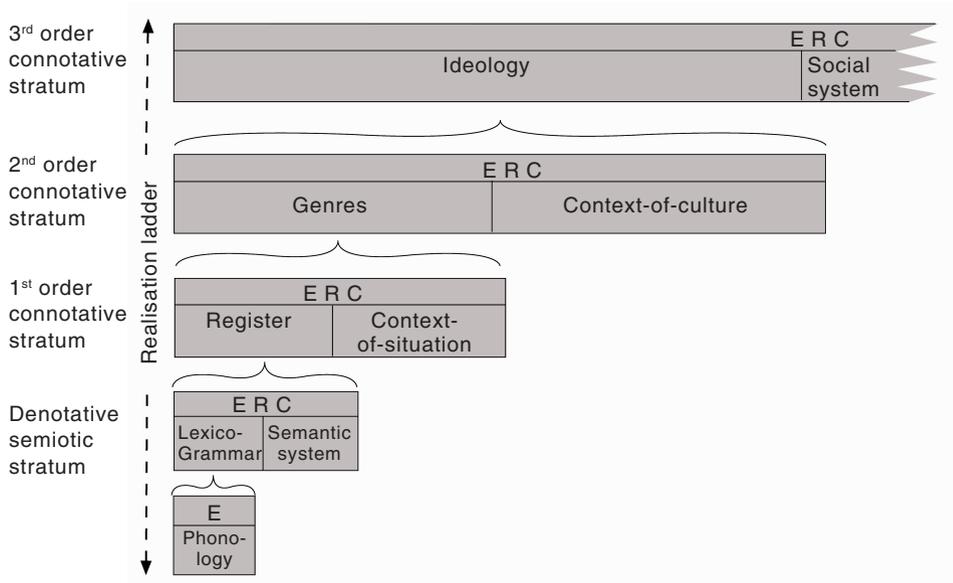
Both these models need to be fleshed out before their use for context reconstruction purposes can be explained. Perhaps the most original contribution of sociosemiotic theory is that it attempts to explicate with some precision *the way in which situational features condition the particulars of the text*. This is where the structural correlation model comes in. To make the connection between text and context, the theory uses a bridging hypothesis whereby the situation (or more precisely: the situation *type*) is broken down into manageable components relatable to the linguistic system. What is more, it describes the situational components and their counterparts within the linguistic system in abstract terms that highlight the systematic relationship between them. While the linguistic correlates go by the names *ideational*, *interpersonal* and *textual* metafunctions,<sup>20</sup> the corresponding contextual components are referred to as *field*, *tenor*, and *mode* (Halliday 1990: 128ff). The model can be represented in the following way:

**Figure 2.** Halliday’s Structural Correlation Model

Context	<p><b>FIELD</b> (The social action)</p> <p>Setting, contents, subject matters, activities (including communicative goals)</p>	<p><b>TENOR</b> (The role structure)</p> <p>Participant identities and statuses, social and discursive roles, role relationships</p>	<p><b>MODE</b> (The symbolic organisation)</p> <p>Means of mediation (including channels of communication), the function to language in relation to the social action and the role structure, rhetorical mode, genre</p>
Determination	<p>↓      ↑</p>	<p>↓      ↑</p>	<p>↓      ↑</p>
Text	<p>The ideational metafunction</p>	<p>The interpersonal metafunction</p>	<p>The textual metafunction</p>

Regarding the multistratal realisation model, its merit is that it explains the interrelationship between linguistic practices, higher-order semiotic systems (i.e. registers, genres and ideologies) and social structures. The model sees the articulation of language and society as organised into five levels with a realisation relationship holding between them – as displayed in Figure 3:

**Figure 3.** *The Articulation of Situation, Culture and the Social System*



What this multi-levelled model of articulation achieves is to specify the way in which situations, socio-cultural structures, and ideologies are projected through semiotic practices. In other words, it anchors the level of ideology in the level of concrete semiotic practices. When applied for empirical research purposes, the model's ability to uncover ideologies has a clear critical potential.<sup>21</sup>

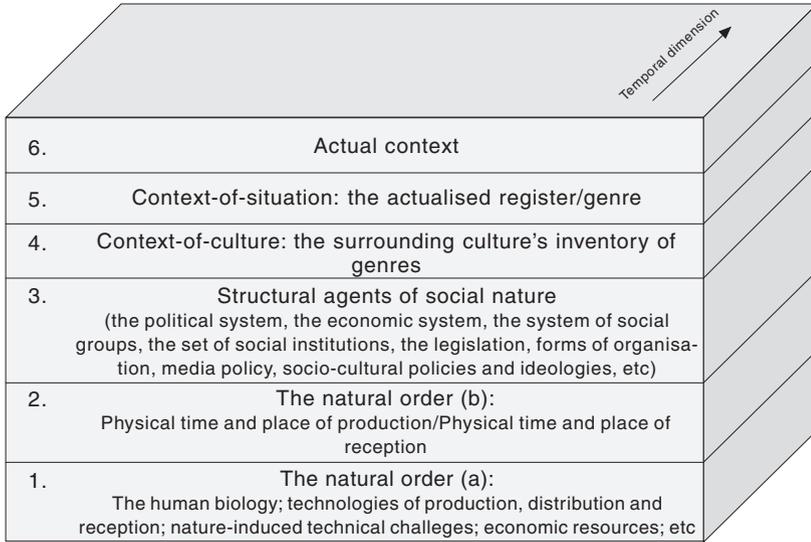
Let us look at the use of the three perspectives for discourse-analytical and methodological purposes. When it comes to the support that the context reconstruction is meant to perform in relation to the explanation of historical texts, both Halliday's structural correlation model and Goffman's frame model are applicable. The difference between them in this function is that the frame model has a bias in favour of the context and its organisation, whereas the structural correlation model focuses on the systematic relationship between contextual configurations and semantic choices in the text. This means that Goffman's model is suited for research interests that lie with the structuring agents of the context and their interrelationship, while Halliday's model with its implicit text-centred viewpoint is tailored to do the job of helping analysts to find contextual explanations for such-and-such pattern(s) of meaning-making to be found in a specific text or genre.

As regards *text interpretation*, both model 2 and 3 are relevant – with Halliday's structural correlation model functioning on the level of the context-of-situation and the multistratal realisation model functioning in the interpretation of higher-order connotative meanings on the levels of culture and society.

As for the methodical use of the perspectives in the creation of context reconstructions, their main function is that of guiding the exploration of historical data so as to identify the relevant situational features and explicate the various relationships holding between them. Goffman's frame theory is sometimes represented by way of a different metaphor, either as a stack of layers or as a pyramid structure. If one takes the liberty to concretise that metaphor using generalised layers that correspond to the socio-semi-

otic strata displayed in Figure 3, while introducing the splitting in two of the bottom layer, the result can be represented as in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4.** *The Multiple Layers of Radio Contexts Through Time à la Goffman*



Because of their inherent qualities, a particular division of labour between the two determination models comes naturally when they are to be used as methodical guidelines for the identification of context parameters. While Halliday's correlation model ensures that the reconstruction will consist of context parameters on Factor 3 with explanatory power in relation to the characteristic patterns of meaning in radio texts from the period, Goffman's model informs the selection of context parameters on the two bottom factors accommodating contextual parameters of natural origin (i.e., on factors 1 and 2).

### Summary and Conclusion

This article took its point of departure in a set of central hypotheses within sociologically oriented theories of language: (1) Texts can only be described, interpreted and explained with reference to their contexts; (2) contexts are dynamic in nature; and (3) every context is the result so far of an ongoing process – both as *type* and as *instance*.

It was observed that texts may be preserved across time, while contexts may not. The question, then, is whether it is possible to interpret and explain texts that have originated in contexts belonging to the past. More precisely, the question is whether it is possible to avoid anachronistic readings based on one's own frames of reference, so as to arrive at *historically correct* interpretations and explanations.<sup>22</sup> According to the argument that was carried out in the first two chapters of this article, the only hope lies in gaining some kind of access to the contexts that once engendered the texts. The methodical recommendation that historians and genre analysts generally give – that one should read a large number of texts from the period attentively – was considered at this stage in the argumentation. It was figured out, however, that this method may possibly enable analysts

to extract historical meanings from texts, but it will not yield the kind of support that is necessary in order to explain either the texts themselves, or the formation and evolution of the underlying text norm.

Against the background of that argumentation, I suggested that the solution should be *historical context reconstruction*, and provided an overview of the specific methodology that I have used for my own research on the texts and contexts of early Norwegian radio. Whether this solution lives up to its promises is an empirical question that can only be answered by using the methodology to create an actual context reconstruction and then testing whether this context reconstruction is doing its job or not. As far as I can see from my results, the answer is positive (see further Vagle 2006).

## Notes

1. This article is based on my dissertation with the title "*I think the listeners would like me to ask you, Mr Prime Minister, ...*". *The history of texts and contexts in Norwegian radio with emphasis on the early period* (dissertation submitted for the degree of dr. philos., University of Oslo, Faculty of Arts, 2006).
2. For transcription conventions, see appendix.
3. The articulation is distinct, the natural voice level is relatively loud and the miking is half-total or total with the microphone placed at the distance of an arm's length – to judge by the tonal frequency characteristics of the voice, the reverberation level, and the lack of mouth sounds.
4. It is far from obvious that this should be the goal of the reading of texts from the past. In fact, other goals – such as enlightenment – have a long history in Western culture. Yet, it appears that our times are witnessing a rise in the interest in the historicity of texts (confer Jordheim: 2001).
5. The reportage from which the three text samples are taken was originally broadcast in two portions during the day of November 9th 1935. The programme schedule of "Riksprogrammet" (NRK's nationwide monopoly channel at the time) featured the following entries:

At 1:15 p.m.: "Med åpningstoget over Vegårdsheia. Kortbølgeoverføring fra toget" (in English: "On board the opening train over Vegårdsheia. Short wave transmission from the train"). [Next programme at about 1:30 p.m.],

At 5:00 p.m.: "Med åpningstoget på Sørlandsbanen. Reportasje tatt på gramfon underveis mellom Oslo og Arendal. Derefter gramfonmusikk" (in English: "On board the opening train on the Southern railway. Reportage recorded by gramophone between Oslo and Arendal. Followed by gramophone music" [next programme at 6:00 p.m.].

The programme schedule also featured a thematically related 30-minute-long talk at 7:30 p.m. with the title "Arendal og omliggende distrikt gjennom tidene" (in English: "Arendal and the surrounding district up through history") and a so-called "microphone visit" at 10:15 p.m. with the title "Fra Vegårdshei. Mikrofonbesøk på jernbaneanlegget hos medaljbas Berg og hans arbeidskamerater" (in English: "From Vegårdshei. Microphone visit at the railway construction plant with gang foreman Berg and his fellow workers").

A collection of the original gramophone recordings from the two reportage broadcasts is to be found in NRK's radio programme archive under the title "Åpningen av Sørlandsbanen frem til Arendal" (in English: "The opening of the Southern railway to Arendal") in a document (magnetic tape) that is catalogued 53308 + 53309. The archive copy, it says on the archive card, was produced in April 1974.
6. The lexical item *listener* in the plural definite form. In Norwegian: *lytterne*.
7. The 1930 edition of *Hvem er hvem* (Who is who) verifies that Edward August Gundersen was born in Kristiansand in 1869.
8. Rhetorical anaphora (also called epanaphora) is a figure of speech that involves repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive clauses, sentences or verses (Wales 1989: 23).
9. In Norwegian: *foredrag*.
10. In the Norwegian original: "jeg skal bare bringe i mine tilhøreres erindring at ...".
11. The distinction between text *interpretation* and text *explanation* introduced in this paragraph draws on the methodology and practical procedure of discourse analysis that Norman Fairclough has developed in various books and articles up through the 1990s. Fairclough distinguishes between three

stages of critical discourse analysis, which he labels *text description*, *text interpretation* and *text explanation*, and describes in the following way:

“Description is the stage which is concerned with formal properties of the text.

Interpretation is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction – with seeing the text as the product of a process of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation; notice that I use the term interpretation for both the interactional process and a stage of analysis [...].

Explanation is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context – with the social determination of the processes of production and interpretation, and their social effects” (Fairclough 1989:26, confer also Vagle 1995).

12. Of course, exceptions to this rule exist – notably within the tradition of reception studies, reception history included, where the research interest may lie with specific readings by particular interpreters.
13. Abduction has been extensively discussed by the semiotician Charles S. Peirce, as well as by the philosopher of science Esa Itkonen (Itkonen 1978).
14. Take the adjective “vinskibelig”, which Gundersen uses when describing the population of Southern Norway (R75.30). My guess is that the majority of Norwegians today have never heard the word before.
15. The argument that I have built up in the paragraphs above has been inspired by a conference paper presented by Inez Ruppel at a seminar on text history in Oslo in October 2001. The paper, entitled “Writing the History of Texts: A Historian’s Perspective”, has been published in a report by Prosjektmiljøet Norsk Sakprosa (Ruppel 2002 [Berge ed.]).
16. According to the basically semiotic understanding of context underpinning my research, contexts – like genres – are social norms. The type of method with which to examine research objects of this kind can be characterised as a “reconstructing empirical-explicative method” – “reconstructing” because the purpose of the method is to reconstruct the tacit normative basis of the participants’ actions, “empirical” because the method uses empirical data, and “explicative” because the functioning of the method is to externalise the unperceivable and hence not-observable norm(s) underpinning particular human practices (Berge 1993:78ff).
17. Detailed advice on procedures is to be found in many textbooks dealing with historical methods of investigation. See for instance Dahl’s introduction to the use of historical methods in media studies (Dahl 2005).
18. *Sociosemiotic theory* is the name used by the theory’s first architect, Michael Halliday (see for instance: Halliday 1990 [1978]). Within media studies, the theory goes by the name *social semiotics* (see for instance: Kress & van Leeuwen 1996, van Leeuwen 1999, van Leeuwen 2005). Within linguistics, it is probably most widely known by the name *systemic functional linguistics* (or SFL for short). For a recent publication, which assembles Nordic contributions within the field, see Berge & Maagerø (eds.) 2005.
19. Neither in this case is determination to be understood as “direct causation”. Although the direction of determination is thought to go primarily from the situation to the text, it also has a backward path. A text is not only determined by the situation; it also contributes to the definition of that situation. In Figure 2 below, this reciprocity is represented in the form of double sets of arrows correlating the situational and semantic components.
20. The metafunctions, or classes of sign-functions, are not easy to describe in few words, but let me try. Language users employ *ideational functions* for presenting “states of affairs” – experiences with the “inner” and “outer” world, as well as experiences that have already been formulated in signs. In alluding to the binary “form/content” partitioning of the message that prevails in mass communication research, one could say that it is this metafunction, that infuses texts with “content”. *Interpersonal functions* enable actors to partake in social relationships and to mark them on the dimensions of social hierarchy and solidarity. A separate subgroup of interpersonal functions, sometimes referred to as expressive functions, holds means for expressing subjectivity and social identity. *Textual functions* are used for combining the different meanings of a message into a composite text and for anchoring the text to its context.
21. For a more comprehensive presentation and discussion of the three perspectives, see Vagle 2005.
22. The idea of “historically correct interpretations and explanations” was discussed under the heading “Exemplifying the Problem of Historical Text Analysis”. A simple way to rephrase the expression is to say that it refers to interpretations and explanations that members from the original historical contexts used to make.

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## Appendix

### *Transcription conventions*<sup>1</sup>

#### Units

Turn	[ <i>speaker identification</i> ]
Macrosyntagm (MS) unit <sup>2</sup>	[ <i>separated by carriage return</i> ]
Boundary within combined MS	*
Word	[ <i>separated by space</i> ]
Truncated intonation unit	—
Truncated word	-

#### Speakers

Speaker identity/turn beginning	[ <i>speaker initials in CAPITALS</i> ]
Interviewer	IER
Interviewee	IEE
TD	Thorstein Diesen
G	Oberstløyntnant Gundersen
Speech overlap	[ ]

#### Pause

Very long	... (N) [ <i>duration in 1/10 seconds</i> ]
Long	...
Short	.
Latching	(0)

#### Music, sounds, sound effects and ambiance

Sounds	((SHORT DESCRIPTION))
Background sound ambiance	((X STARTS)) ((X ENDS)) <sup>3</sup>
Production circumstances	((SHORT DESCRIPTION)) <sup>4</sup>

#### Transcriber's perspective

Transcriber's/researcher's comment	((COMMENT))
Uncertain hearing	<X ... X>
Indecipherable syllable	X
Indecipherable stretch of speech	X=
Focus of analysis	<u>underline</u>

#### INDEXING<sup>5</sup>

Programmes	A, B, C, etc
Turns	1, 2, 3, etc
Macrosyntagm units within turns	.1, .2, .3, etc
Backchannels without turn status	~ b
Aborted turns	# [ <i>index number starting with #</i> ]

#### Notes

1. Most of the conventions are adopted from a discourse transcription system developed at the Linguistics Department and the Centre for the Study of Spoken Discourse at UCSB (University of California at Santa Barbara) (Du Bois 1991; Du Bois et al 1991; Du Bois et al 1993). A couple of conventions are taken from Crowdy 1991. The segmentation principle stems from the Nordic macrosyntagm model (Teleman 1974; Hanssen et al. 1978; Vagle 1990:110ff). The index system, the format codes, and the speech production symbols have been devised for the purpose of the present study.
2. Macrosyntagms are sentence-like text units.
3. Example: ((MUSIC STARTS)) ((MUSIC ENDS)).
4. Circumstances demanding descriptions can be audible shifts in setting, microphone trouble, unwarranted long pauses, noticeable editing, etc.
5. Index numbers based on this system look like this: A2.3, K2.3, ~M4.b1, etc. The text segment with index number A2.3 is identified as macrosyntagm 3 within turn 2 in programme A.