Key Themes and New Directions in Systemic Functional Translation Studies

This collection features eight interviews with seven senior scholars, whose seminal works involve the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to translation studies and have advanced Systemic Functional Translation Studies (SFTS) as a research agenda in its own right, with critical reflections and insights into future directions.

The book introduces SFTS as a research field, tracing its development and situating the contributions of the scholars interviewed within this tradition. An international group of researchers working across a diverse range of topics within SFTS are interviewed, including Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen, Erich Steiner, J.R. Martin, Juliane House, Jeremy Munday, Adriana Pagano and Akila Sellami-Baklouti. Taken together, the collection offers a comprehensive account of theoretical and methodological developments in SFTS, with critical overviews of these scholars’ body of work within the research area and reflections on the emerging research that pushes SFTS scholarship into new frontiers.

This volume will be of particular interest to scholars in translation studies and Systemic Functional Linguistics, as well as those interested in innovations in linguistic theory.

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Key Themes and New Directions in Systemic Functional Translation Studies

Edited by
Bo Wang and Yuanyi Ma
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Contributors

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in Higher Education (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) with Shoshana Dreyfus, Sally Humphrey and Ahmar Mahboob; a book on youth justice conferencing, Discourse and Diversionary Justice (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) with Michele Zappavigna; an edited special issue of Functions of Language (2018), focusing on interpersonal grammar; and a collection of papers on interpersonal grammar, Interpersonal Grammar: Systemic Functional Theory and Description (Cambridge University Press, 2021), edited with Beatriz Quiroz and Giacomo Figueredo. Professor Martin was elected a fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 1998, and was Head of its Linguistics Section from 2010 to 2012; he was awarded a Centenary Medal for his services to Linguistics and Philology in 2003.


Jeremy Munday is Professor of Translation Studies at the University of Leeds. His specialisms are linguistic translation theories, discourse analysis (including Systemic Functional Linguistics), ideology and translation, and Latin American literature in translation. He is the author of Introducing Translation Studies (4th ed., Routledge, 2016) and Evaluation in Translation (Routledge, 2012).
Adriana Pagano is Full Professor in Translation Studies and Principal Investigator at Laboratory for Experimentation in Translation (LETRA), Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), Brazil. She conducts research on systemic-functional modeling of translation and multilingual text production, domain knowledge in translator expertise development, and human-computer interaction in machine-assisted human translation.

Akila Sellami-Baklouti is Professor of English Language and Linguistics in the Faculty of Letters and Humanities, University of Sfax, Tunisia. She lectures mainly on syntax, semantics, systemic functional grammar, academic writing, and research methodology. She is the coordinator of the Master’s Program in English Linguistic Studies and Director of the Research Laboratory “Approaches to Discourse” at the University of Sfax. With a group of researchers, she founded the Systemic Functional Linguistics Association of Tunisia (www.syflat.tn), with the main objective of promoting systemic functional research in Tunisia by training researchers and organizing academic events in the field. Her research interests and PhD supervision areas include Systemic Functional Linguistics, genre-based contrastive language and translation studies, and the syntax–semantics–discourse interface with a special focus on genre analysis. Her latest publications include “Transitivity-ergativity Perspectives on Causation in Legal Texts: A Contrastive Study of Arabic and English Website Terms of Service” (Lingua, 2019); *Perspectives from Systemic Functional Linguistics* (Routledge, 2018); and “Activation of Lexico-grammatical Choices by Hybrid Contexts: Interpersonal Uses of Language in Peer Review Reports in Linguistics and Mathematics” (In D.R. Miller and P. Bayley (eds.), *Hybridity in Systemic Functional Linguistics: Grammar, Text and Discursive Context*, 2016).

Erich Steiner, born 1954 in Heidelberg/Germany, studied English and German Philology in Freiburg, Saarbrücken, Cardiff, Reading, and London, and held academic posts in Saarbrücken, Luxembourg, and Darmstadt. He served as Head of Department, Pro-Dean and Dean at the University of Saarland in Saarbrücken, and has received calls from several other universities. Between 1990 and 2020, he was Chair of English Linguistics and Translation Studies, later English Translation Studies, Department of Language Science and Technology, University of Saarland, Saarbrücken. His major research interests include functional linguistics, translation theory and comparative linguistics, as well as empirical linguistics more generally. He has been Visiting Professor at Rice University, Houston/Texas, the University of Southern California/Los Angeles, Dublin City University, Macquarie University, the University of Technology Sydney, the University of Oslo, as well as the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and City University of Hong Kong over the past 35 years. He retired from his university chair in April 2020.
# Abbreviations

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AI</td>
<td>artificial intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COCA</td>
<td>Corpus of Contemporary American English</td>
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<tr>
<td>DALS</td>
<td>Doctor of Applied Language Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSP</td>
<td>Functional Sentence Perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFG</td>
<td><em>Introduction to Functional Grammar</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>IR</td>
<td>Interlingual Reformulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISFC</td>
<td>International Systemic Functional Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSA</td>
<td>Linguistic Society of America</td>
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<td>MT</td>
<td>machine translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>PolyU</td>
<td>The Hong Kong Polytechnic University</td>
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<td>POS</td>
<td>part of speech</td>
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<td>PUC</td>
<td>Pontifical Catholic University</td>
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<td>RST</td>
<td>Rhetorical Structure Theory</td>
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<td>SFG</td>
<td>Systemic Functional Grammar</td>
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<td>SFL</td>
<td>Systemic Functional Linguistics</td>
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<td>SFTS</td>
<td>Systemic Functional Translation Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>SL</td>
<td>source language</td>
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<td>ST</td>
<td>source text</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIS</td>
<td>Translation and Interpreting Studies</td>
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<td>TL</td>
<td>target language</td>
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<td>TT</td>
<td>target text</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPR</td>
<td>translation process research</td>
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<td>TS</td>
<td>translation studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>UFMG</td>
<td>Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais</td>
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<td>UFSC</td>
<td>Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina</td>
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Introduction

Bo Wang and Yuanyi Ma

Why did we write this book?

We were motivated to work on this book by two of our encounters in academia. The first was with Dr. Li from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 2015. At that time, we had not yet started our thesis writing process and were simply two naïve novice scholars. One day, Dr. Li, who was assigned to be the examiner of Bo Wang’s thesis proposal on applying Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to drama translation (Wang 2017, later published as Wang & Ma 2020), invited Bo Wang to his office to discuss Bo Wang’s thesis proposal. During the talk, Li was very critical of the proposal and his criticism was based mainly on the following points:

- Systemic Functional Translation Studies was a term that one could not use because he had never heard of this term and it was simply a term for laymen.
- The logical metafunction was something he did not know, so it must have been made up by Bo Wang to fool him.

After meeting with Dr. Li, Bo Wang felt discouraged; however, he was encouraged by Professor Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen, who kindly agreed to supervise Bo Wang’s thesis. Despite the challenges, we were further inspired by Li and eventually wrote a book titled Systemic Functional Translation Studies (Wang & Ma 2021), which provides a survey of the research area of applying SFL to translation.

Our second encounter was with Dongfeng Wang from Sun Yat-sen University, where Bo Wang worked from 2018 to 2021. In early 2021, at a meeting where candidates were supposed to defend themselves in order to be promoted, Dongfeng Wang, as the only scholar working on translation to attend the meeting, vehemently attacked the systemic functional approach to translation. One can sense such venom towards the area from the points he made:

- SFL is never a holistic theory of language. It only involves the study of grammar and is never capable of examining phonetics, phonology, semantics and context.