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EDITORIAL

New directions of systemic functional linguistics

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Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is an important linguistic tradition which M.A.K. Halliday originated while studying Chinese at Peking University in the late 1940 s. This same tradition also played a crucial role in the establishment of the linguistic program for foreign language studies at Peking University in the 1980 s. In 1995, the 22nd International Congress on Systemic Functional Linguistics was held at Peking University, during which Professor M.A.K. Halliday was awarded the title of Peking University Honorary Professor. In 2015, Professor Halliday came back to the School and spoke at the 5th National Advanced Workshop of Linguistics.

The year 2018 marked not only the 120th anniversary of Peking University, but also the 30th anniversary of the first national conference of Systemic Functional Linguistics in China which was held in August 1989 in Lin Hu Xuan (临湖轩) at Peking University. Participants at this conference subsequently became the leading figures in the SFL tradition in China, including Zhuanglin Hu (Emeritus Professor, Peking University, founder and currently Honorary President of the China Association of Functional Linguistics Society), Yan Fang (Professor, Tsinghua University), Chaoguang Yang (Professor, University of International Business and Economics), Yongsheng Zhu (Professor, Fudan University), and Delu Zhang (Professor, Tongji University). To celebrate the two anniversaries and to show our great respect to Professor Halliday who pioneered Systemic Functional Linguistics, one of the two most influential linguistic paradigms in the 20th century (the other being Generative Linguistics), an international forum on Systemic Functional Linguistics was held in October 20 to 21, 2018.

Over 150 scholars and researchers participated in the conference. They were welcomed at the Opening Ceremony by Professor Qi Ning, Dean of the School of Foreign Languages, Peking University, and by Professor Yan Fang of Tsinghua University. The forum was jointly hosted by Peking University (the School of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Humanities, and Office of International Relations); Guangdong University of Foreign Studies – Centre for Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, and the Halliday-Hasan International Fund for the Study of Language and Other Systems of Meaning; China Association of Functional Linguistics and China Association of English-Chinese Discourse Analysis of the China Association for Comparative Studies of English and Chinese. It was also co-hosted by the journal *Foreign Languages in China* and Peking University Press. The forum was organized by the Institute of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics in the School of Foreign Languages, Peking University.

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Participating in the forum were representatives and leading international scholars in various subfields of SFL, including Professor Zhuanglin Hu, Peking University; Professor Yan Fang, Tsinghua University; Professor James R. Martin, Sydney University; Professor Jonathan J. Webster, City University of Hong Kong; Professor Guowen Huang, South China Agricultural University and Chair of the China Association of Discourse Analysis; Professor Xuanwei Peng, Guangdong University of International Studies and Chair of the China Association of Functional Linguistics; Professor David Butt, Macquarie University; Professor Wendy Bowcher, Sun Yat-sen University; Professor K. L. O'Halloran, Curtin University; Professor Zhihui Fang, University of Florida; Professor Shoshana Dreyfus, Wollongong University; and Professor Karl Maton, University of Sydney.

The theme of the forum was "New Directions of Systemic Functional Linguistics". Topic areas covered by the keynote speeches and session presentations were concerned with both theoretical explorations and applications of SFL. Theoretical issues discussed included interpersonal metaphor, metaphor-making potential in verbal art and verbal science, circumstantiation, construction of a 3-phased model of text, social semiotic perspective on fragmentation, systemic ecolinguistics and discourse semantics of Chinese language. Applicability of Systemic Functional Linguistics was also demonstrated in the analysis of verbal art, disciplinary literacy instruction, the treatment of psychological trauma and its interactional syndromes, multimodal discourse analysis, translation studies, and in the development of Legitimation Code Theory.

Included in this special issue are the following topics covered in the presentations by keynote speakers and session presenters. James R. Martin's keynote speech focuses on interpersonal grammatical metaphor, discussing the mechanism of grammatical metaphor with reference to inter-stratal tension. Dreyfus and Hao discuss how circumstantial meanings can be deployed in different disciplines "to create 'ambience' in literary texts and build up knowledge" across academic disciplines.

From the very first national conference for systemic functional linguistics in China, Chinese scholars have endeavored to use systemic functional linguistic theories to explicate some linguistic issues concerning Chinese language. Such efforts have had profound influence on the studies of Chinese language not only within the systemic functional linguistics community but also in Chinese linguistic studies. One of the issues which Chinese scholars has sought to address for decades is the dangling topical elements in Chinese sentences. Fang, McDonald, and Cheng (1995) and Fang (2008) are two remarkable papers on this issue. They explored the thematic status of such elements in clauses as message. In her recent paper, Fang (2019) developed a comprehensive system of Themes in the Chinese language. Gao's keynote speech addresses this issue from a discourse semantics perspective by investigating the occurrences of Marked Themes in a corpus of spoken Chinese, focusing on the functions of Marked Themes in discourse. Gao concludes that these elements play a role in building taxonomical relations among participants in activity sequences.

Systemic functional linguistics has been widely applied in disciplinary studies and literacy instructions (Byrnes 2009; Fang and Wang 2011). In his keynote speech, Zhihui Fang proposes a new model of 5Es pedagogical heuristic. By scrutinizing how language is deployed in disciplinary reading instruction, he demonstrates the potential to promote knowledge building and critical literacy development simultaneously.

The cooperation between systemic functional linguists and sociologists played a fundamental role in the development of both disciplines, as evidenced in the coordination between those working in systemic functional linguists and code theory. Work done by Labov on phonological variations and Bernstein on code inspired Ruqaiya Hasan to explore semantic variation among children brought up in families of different social backgrounds. This first-generation cooperation, though viewed as mutually independent (Christie et al. 2007), opened the dialogue between code theory and systemic functional linguistics, which has been further extended by James R. Martin and Karl Maton into Legitimation Code Theory. Maton's keynote speech showcases the new phase of development of Legitimate Code Theory, namely autonomy codes. Data from classroom observations demonstrate how knowledge practices may be repurposed and connected to support learners' knowledge building.

Systemic functional linguistics has not only informed literacy education, it has also inspired studies in identity construction which interfaces social studies and linguistics. By analyzing the generic structures and linguistic features of the talks and letters of the presidents of Peking University and Tsinghua University, Tian demonstrates how the two presidents construct top university identities in public communication.

This special issue is a joint effort of many people, with special appreciation to Professor Guowen Huang who offered us the chance to organize this special issue and who also co-hosted the conference. We sincerely thank our contributors to this special issue. We also express our appreciation to Professor Qi Ning, Dean of the School of Foreign Languages, Professor Yihong Gao, Director of the Institute of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics for their support for organizing the conference. Our gratitude also to Professor Xuanwei Peng, Chair of China Association of Functional Linguistics and Director of the Centre for Functional Linguistics at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies who generously sponsored and co-chaired the conference.

Finally, in this issue, we pay our greatest respect to Professor Halliday who left us on 15 April 2018 and to Professor Ruqaiya Hasan who left us on 24 June 2015. Their academic legacies will be carried on by generations of systemic functional linguists in the years to come. Hu (2017) traced the connections between Halliday's theories and his early experiences in China, the periods with Changpei Luo at Peking University and Li Wang at Lingnan University in particular. Recalling the four decades long development of SFL in China, Hu predicts that this paradigm will continue to prosper in its development as more and more young Chinese scholars join the global SFL community.

Disclosure statement

Notes on contributors

Yanmei Gao is associate professor at Peking University, Beijing, China. Her research areas include systemic functional linguistics, discourse semantics and English lexicology. She authored two monographs, *A Multifunctional Approach to the Semantics of Function Words* (2004) and *Constructing Semantic Frames in Discourse* (2015) published by Peking University Press and

edited six English textbooks. Recently she is working on evaluative language and exchange structures in face-to-face interaction across languages.

Jonathan J Webster For more than ten years, Jonathan Webster headed up the Department of Chinese, Translation and Linguistics at City University of Hong Kong. He is currently Director of The Halliday Centre for Intelligent Applications of Language Studies at CityU. He has served as the Editor of the Collected Works of several leading scholars, including M.A.K Halliday, Ruqaiya Hasan, Sydney Lamb, and Braj B. Kachru. He authored the book *Understanding Verbal Art: A Functional Linguistic Approach,* published by Springer; and co-authored (with M.A.K. Halliday) *Text Linguistics: The how and why of meaning,* published by Equinox UK. In addition, he is the founding Editor of *Linguistics and the Human Sciences*, Equinox (UK); Managing Editor of the journal *WORD*; and co-editor of the *Journal of World Languages.*

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