

Book Review

Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, Bo Wang, Yuanyi Ma and Isaac N. Mwinlaaru (eds.). 2022. *Systemic functional insights on language and linguistics*. Singapore: Springer, xxii+313 pp. ISBN: 978-981-16-8712-9 (hbk).

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Systemic functional insights on language and linguistics, edited by Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, Bo Wang, Yuanyi Ma, and Isaac N. Mwinlaaru, is the newest addition to the M. A. K. Halliday Library Functional Linguistics Series co-edited by Chenguang Chang and Guowen Huang. As the title of this volume suggests, it is intended to showcase insights into language and linguistics from the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The book is a collection of 10 interviews with Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, one of M. A. K. Halliday's closest collaborators and the most significant contributors to SFL. The volume recounts Matthiessen's study and working experience in different parts of the world, interprets key conceptual issues in SFL, explores the connection of SFL with other theoretical research fields, and discusses the value of its applicability in different contexts.

Besides a foreword by Chenguang Chang and an editors' preface, this volume comprises two parts. Part I (Chapters 1–3), "Personal Histories", provides some background information on Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's life and work. It discusses the distinctive properties of SFL, the interactions between SFL and other schools of linguistic traditions in Europe and America, and Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's scholarly contributions, through recounts of his early interest in SFL and his institutional experiences studying and working in Europe, the US, Australia, and Hong Kong SAR, China. Part II (Chapters 4–10), "Systemic Functional Linguistics and Its Applications", presents Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's interpretations of SFL and his discussions on the applications of SFL. It delineates some conceptual issues (e.g. "systemic", "functional", "theory") in SFL, recounts the historical development of SFL, and explores the contributions of SFL to computational linguistics, cognitive linguistics, language typology, and translation studies.

Chapter 1 starts with Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's academic experience from the 1970s to the early 2000s, from Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's early experiences of linguistics to his motivations for working with SFL, and provides an overview of the contemporary development of linguistics from a personal

angle. This chapter recounts Matthiessen's fascination with M. A. K. Halliday's publications at Lund University and his first impression of M. A. K. Halliday's work. Beyond the personal angle, this chapter discusses distinctive properties of SFL, such as the commitment to comprehensive descriptions of language as a meaning-making resource, the priority to the paradigmatic axis around which the theory and description of language are organized, and the theorization of the connection between system and instance as the cline of instantiation. This chapter also sheds light on the connections between SFL and other schools of linguistics in the European and the American traditions, emphasizing the interactions with other functional approaches like Prague School, Glossematics, and Tagmemics.

Chapter 2 continues to introduce Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's institutional experiences, their influences, and his scholarship. This chapter elaborates on his experience as a linguistic student at Lund University and the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). The chapter also introduces Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's M.A. thesis on the grammatical and semantic interpretation of the system of tense in English, and his PhD dissertation on text generation. Based on Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's academic background at UCLA, this chapter continues to discuss West Coast Functionalism, the differences and the dialogic potential between SFL and West Coast Functionalism. In the last two sections, the account of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's working experience at the University of Sydney and Macquarie University highlights the importance of continuity in developing collective knowledge.

Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive map of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's scholarly contributions, including publications, postgraduate supervision, unpublished works, and ongoing projects, by tracing his research trajectory in Sydney and Hong Kong since the 1980s. His research covers SFL theory, language description, multilingual studies, register studies, multimodal studies, educational linguistics, and healthcare communication studies. Moreover, this chapter provides Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's reflections on future development of SFL, strengthening collaboration – the tenor aspect of academic process – as an important part of prospected studies.

Chapter 4, marking the beginning of the second part, explores SFL's applications in other research areas. Relating SFL to a family of functional approaches, this chapter discusses the uniqueness of SFL by explaining “systemic” and “functional”. It highlights the uniqueness of SFL among other approaches: its primary organization is paradigmatic (i.e. systemic). In the aspect of development, this chapter delineates different terms of SFL in different phases from scale-&-category theory to systemic functional theory, in which the formulation of metafunction theory and the approach of applicable linguistics

have played a key role. Besides, this chapter introduces Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's ongoing project of a multilingual version of *Introduction to functional grammar* (hereafter *IFG*) and M. A. K. Halliday's unfinished works on systemic theory. In the last two sections, this chapter explores the notion of metafunction in the aspect of ontogenesis and explains the conventions of technical terms in SFL.

Chapter 5 discusses the application of SFL in the computational context by taking SFL as an applicable theory of language, exploring applications that have mutually shaped SFL and computational linguistics. This chapter first provides M. A. K. Halliday's early explorations in machine translation where he emphasizes the principle of thesaurus in modeling mechanical translation, and the later attempts in the area of parsing and generation in the 1980s and 1990s. It then examines the contributions of SFL to computational linguistics through elaborating Martin Kay's Functional Unification Grammar and summarizing the achievements of the Penman Project on Text Generation. Besides the influences of SFL on computational linguistics, this chapter also explores the influences that computational linguistics brings back to SFL in terms of application, theoretical development, and language description, which contribute to the explicit modeling of inter-stratal realization, instantiation as a process, and metalanguage as a stratal system. In the last section of this chapter, the connections between the Nigel grammar that Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen worked on with Bill Mann in the 1980s and Cardiff Grammar, another application of SFL in computational linguistics, are discussed.

Chapter 6 deals with cognition from the perspective of social semiotics. By placing cognition within the four orders of systems (physical, biological, social, and semiotic), this chapter discusses how to approach cognitive linguistics within SFL and investigates meaning-based approaches different from knowledge-based ones. This chapter also explores discussions on cognition in Cardiff Grammar and the interpretation of semantic stratum related to cognition by Hopper and Traugott. Considering how to relate language to language users, this chapter discusses the process of individuation in relation to instantiation constructed through instances in interaction with people. The chapter attaches great importance to metaphor, a key topic in cognitive linguistics. It differentiates conceptual metaphor in cognitive linguistics from grammatical metaphor in SFL. In addition, this chapter provides advice for future researchers to explore the links between the social semiotic perspective on language and language interacting with the brain.

Chapter 7 explains the contributions of SFL to language typology. It summarizes the characterization of systemic functional typology and delineates its methodologies and goals, highlighting the role of multilingual system

networks in typological studies and the conception of multilingual studies covering language typology, translation studies, and other neighboring areas. Besides, this chapter provides Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's papers on Akan lexicogrammar and phonology as the illumination of the studies on language typology and description of language, exploring the way to interpret Joseph Greenberg's work on typology from the perspective of SFL, with emphasis on the study of "word order". It also introduces the computational tools useful in building data and developing research models in language typology. Moreover, this chapter presents challenges and prospects for systemic functional typology, strengthening the importance of the long-term project to develop a typological database.

The last three chapters of this volume deal with the application of SFL in translation studies, another area of multilingual studies. Chapter 8 investigates the significance of studying translation from the perspective of SFL. Informed by SFL which takes translation as a linguistic process, this chapter covers multiple issues, including the linguistic turn in translation studies, differences between prescriptive and descriptive studies in translation, different environments in which translation is located as a multilingual phenomenon, and translation shifts from the metafunctional perspective. The directions and suggestions for future research are provided in the last section.

Continuing to explore the application of SFL to translation studies, Chapter 9 further examines relevant issues and investigates its theoretical contributions to translation studies. It discusses the acceptance of the term "systemic functional translation studies" as an academic terminology, referring to research into issues of translation "empower by, informed by and guided by SFL" (p. 262) rather than in an institutional sense. Complementary to SFL's theoretical contributions discussed in the preceding chapter, this chapter introduces the contributions made by various key scholars to translation studies, including Firth's register theory, the corpus methodology adopted by Erich Steiner and his group, Mona Baker's textbook for translation studies and translator training, Juliane House's model of translation quality assessment, and J. R. Martin's notion of re-instantiation. Besides, this chapter discusses the notion of function in the Skopos Theory, and explains research in polysystem theory and Descriptive Translation Studies.

The final chapter, also the final part for the exploration of SFL and translation studies in this volume, emphasizes the application of SFL in translation studies in the aspects of textbook and material development, translator training, translation process, and empirical research. This chapter explores the notion of multilingual meaning potential and strengthens the theorizing of translation (including interpreting) as an aspect of multilinguality, viewed as both system

and process, through discussions on Bell and some other scholars' works. Besides, this chapter discusses different aspects of theoretical developments needed for future research, including multilingual meaning potential, multilingual system networks, the instantiation of and activation of meaning potential, linguistic processes covering the processes of translation, interpreting, editing as well as revising, and the computational modeling of linguistic process. By summarizing studies in different parts of the world, this chapter outlines a series of systemic functional contributions to translation studies in different regions and shows that international collaboration on translation studies informed by SFL brings potential for further development as well as challenges. Through the discussion on translation of literary and non-literary texts, this chapter highlights the importance of registerial parameters in translation across different languages, and emphasizes influence of the source context, the target context, and the context of doing translation.

This volume offers a comprehensive picture of systemic functional insights on language and linguistics through the recount of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's academic experience and thinking on a wide range of issues, in terms of theoretical development and its application in different areas. As far as I can see, the following five points are worth mentioning. Firstly, this volume highlights the distinctive nature of SFL: it is not only a general linguistics theory, but also an applicable linguistics (Halliday 2009a). SFL is unique among linguistic theories in that its research "has not been restricted to theoretical questions but has been extended to applications to other fields, offering thus new perspectives and trying to provide a framework that is applicable to other domains of study where language is involved" (Fontaine and Sellami-Baklouti 2018: 1). In terms of SFL as a general linguistics theory, this volume discusses key conceptions in SFL, its priority to meaning-oriented comprehensive descriptions organized around choice, the architecture of language in context and systemic functional typology. In terms of SFL as applicable linguistics, this volume explores its engagement with computational linguistics, cognitive linguistics, language typology, and translation studies, demonstrating its evolution process in ways of "the ongoing experience of its use" and "its constant extension to new areas of enquiry and of action" (Halliday 2009a: 61).

Secondly, this volume adopts a multilingual perspective to explore theory and applicability, a perspective taken through Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's different phases of academic research. On the one hand, Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen proposes a multilingual version of *IFG* referring to key systems in a range of languages, and pursues the long-term project of developing a typological database to provide systemic guidance in describing a "new" language. On the

other hand, by locating translation studies in the spectrum of multilingual studies, Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen explores the multilingual meaning potential in translation that contributes to investigating the process of translation.

Thirdly, in the field of translation studies, this volume provides a comprehensive exploration of both translation theory and practice. Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's interpretation of systemic functional terms and his emphasis on the source context, the target context, and the context of translation activity contribute to understanding translation as a complex process unfolding through time rather than a single process of meaning transfer or message transmitting. The translation process has been described to start with the instance pole of the cline of instantiation, i.e. the source text in its context of situation, move towards the system pole, "recreating the meanings in the source language and in the target language" (p. 241), and then move down the cline of instantiation again and ends with the instance pole of the cline of instantiation, i.e. the translated text in its context of situation (p. 241). Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's exploration of the environments of translation by taking the reciprocal notions of translation equivalence and translation shift as one cornerstone (Halliday 2009b) also sheds light on other issues in translation studies such as the comparison between descriptive and prescriptive studies, as well as between literal and free translation.

Fourthly, through the recount of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's life and work in different academic environments, which shapes him from a linguistic student to be an outstanding linguist, this volume leads readers to walk through an academic life witnessing the history of SFL, explaining the relation of SFL with different traditions and fields, manifesting its evolution through the works of a range of scholars, and providing suggestions and directions for future research.

Lastly, the dialogic mode enacted in interviews allows the interviewers and interviewee to reach the issues "that might not otherwise have been addressed" (p. 302) and makes the volume more accessible considering the range and complexity of the topics discussed.

Overall, this volume is well structured with carefully prepared questions to bring about Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's thinking on a wide range of issues, theoretical and applicable, providing insightful and instructive contributions to language and linguistics from a systemic functional perspective. It is a valuable thought-provoking resource for researchers, postgraduates, and undergraduates working in SFL, computational linguistics, cognitive linguistics, language typology, and translation studies.

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