

## Book Review

**Bo Wang & Yuanyi Ma (eds.).** 2024. *Theorizing and applying systemic functional linguistics: Developments by Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen*. New York & London: Routledge, xxix+352pp. ISBN: 9780367484897 (hbk).

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*Theorizing and applying systemic functional linguistics: Developments by Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen* is the latest addition to the series of Routledge Studies in Linguistics. As the title suggests, the book showcases how Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, a prominent figure in the field of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and a long-standing collaborator of Michael A. K. Halliday, has heavily influenced current developments in SFL studies. In this book, the advances in theories and applications of SFL are presented through the lens of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's work. Aiming to serve as an essential resource of his academic career, it also includes a documentation of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's life and professional endeavors across various global locations.

Edited by Bo Wang and Yuanyi Ma, the book is a collection of nine chapters written by Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen and another nine leading systemic functional linguists from around the world. The nine chapters are grouped into three parts, each representing a distinct theme. Part I (Chapters 1–3), “Christian Matthiessen and systemic functional theory”, mainly presents some of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's theoretical contributions in the field of SFL, acknowledging his status as a dominant theoretician and a generalist. Part II (Chapters 4–6), “Christian Matthiessen and applications of systemic functional theory”, illustrates the applications of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's SFL ideas in specific areas such as language description, comparison, and typology, as well as healthcare communication and verbal art. The final part, Part III (Chapters 7–10), “Christian Matthiessen and the global influences of Systemic Functional Linguistics”, displays the historical and current state of how SFL evolves in major global regions of the world by tracing Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's professional trajectory as well as his extensive collaborations with scholars around the world.

Chapter 1, contributed by David G. Butt and Annabelle Lukin, delves into the theoretical contributions and cartographic expositions of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen in the field of SFL. The chapter begins by outlining his ten professional coordinates where the cartography derived from, demonstrating his unique abilities and talents. According to the authors of the chapter, one of his books, a magnum opus

titled *Lexicogrammatical cartography: English systems* (Matthiessen 1995) provides not only the grammar of English, but also the implications of the SFL approach to English for the typological issues relating to the comparison of one language's grammar with the grammars and meanings of others. What's more, the chapter shows that Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's use of maps as a central tool in linguistic theories and practical applications has further advanced the understanding of languages and their relationship to society and mind. It depicts that Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen offers a theory that negotiates the representation of meaning across languages and meta-languages through a metafunction to system and rank matrix. After comparisons with the work of other typologists such as Comrie and Palmer, and their approaches to cross-linguistic generalizations, the chapter then points out that Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's work aims to steer institutions away from the trivialization of meaning and towards the recognition that cultures are constructed through realizational systems. Following Michael A. K. Halliday, Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen creates a unique "Matthiessonian" theoretical domain with the point of convergence being an essential feature of his work. The chapter elaborates on his capacity to comprehend and elucidate interrelationships across social, technological, and semiological spheres from a comprehensive viewpoint. David G. Butt and Annabelle Lukin end up the chapter with anticipation for the next phase of Matthiessen's systemic integration of feeling and meeting into understanding human experience.

Chapter 2, written by Erich Steiner, provides an overview of the notion of "register" in the context of SFL, with a focus on the development by Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen. The chapter starts by tracing the historical development of the notion of "register" and its place within SFL. Two main architectural variants within SFL are outlined: one associated with Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, Michael A. K. Halliday, and Ruqaiya Hasan, and the other with J.R. Martin, David Rose, and Peter White. Erich Steiner points out in the chapter that "register" is not unique to SFL and has also been used in other linguistic traditions. For example, empirical studies of language variation have a successful tradition in multidimensional analysis (MDA) by scholars such as Douglas Biber and his associates, who clarify notions of register, genre, and style. The chapter emphasizes that in SFL, "register" is a vital concept and has been central to Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's work, which is intricately interwoven into a comprehensive theory of language. After a review of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's conceptual overviews of "register" in relation to SFL, his ideas are presented, which highlight the importance of integrating a perspective on other semiotic systems into modelling context and register, the need to relate "register" to relevant developments in studies on variation in language and text as well as the role of the individual language user and their ideological stance in linguistic analyses. In addition, the chapter also provides a detailed explanation of

Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's eight subparameters of field of activity and their intersection with the tenor and mode of discourse.

Chapter 3, authored by Gerard O'Grady, reviews previous research on SFL phonology, with particular emphasis on one of Matthiessen's (2021a) findings in this area. The chapter begins with a brief review of the principles underlying Firthian prosodic phonology and traditional Chinese phonology, which are the theoretical underpinnings of systemic phonology. After a discussion of the rank in English and other five languages, Gerard O'Grady claims that the specific ranks in different languages have yet to be determined and that each language should be examined in its own terms. In terms of the nature of systemic phonology, the chapter brings up Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's opinion of perceiving it as sounding potential and interpreting it semiotically rather than cognitively as it is not a set of constraints. Next, in the comparison and contrast of Japanese syllables and English onsets, the functionally important units of phonology in Japanese are identified while the relationship between the 20 most common English onsets and their following vowel nuclei is measured. After examining English onset clusters as charged fields, the chapter concludes that Japanese ideophones at the syllable rank perform similarly to English phonaesthemes at the phoneme rank. Finally, it emphasizes the importance of adopting a systemic functional view to understand the similarities and differences between two languages.

Chapter 4, the opening chapter of Part II written by Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen himself, accounts for almost a third of the pages in this collection. The chapter sets out by characterizing some insights into language description, comparison, and typology within the Firthian-Hallidayan tradition, such as empiricism, polysystemic nature of language, relativism, and descriptivism. After this, the chapter lists ten key features of SFL that are relevant to work on language description, comparison, and typology, five of which are developed in more detail, while the others are mentioned briefly. To be specific, the five essential features fully explored in the chapter are "the distinction between theory and description", "the primacy of systemic organization along the paradigmatic axis over structures along the syntagmatic axis", "the cline of instantiation and the probabilistic nature of the linguistic system", "the inherent variability of the linguistic system", and "the metafunctional spectral organization of language". To complement the other chapters in this collection, which are written by eminent scholars in the field, Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen specially adds a section revealing his individual perspective on his encounters with these areas since around the 1970s. In Section 4.9, he shares his personal experience with language typology since his first reading about it, such as his studying journey throughout different locations and his encounters with linguists from various traditions.

Chapter 5, composed by Neda Karimi, is concerned with Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's empirical and theoretical work in the field of health communication research. Neda Karimi argues in the chapter that Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's efforts in this sphere are intrinsically translational, addressing important gaps in health communication research while fostering collaboration with other health communication researchers and medical professionals. The chapter reveals that together with his team, Systemic Meaning Modelling Group at Macquarie University, Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen developed Multex, a system for generating multimodal reports on communicable disease, and applied it in conjunction with HINTS, a system created for handling communicable disease information. The Multex-HINTS set was used effectively by health officials to produce reports and briefings during the Ebola outbreak in the 1990s and the COVID-19 pandemic in the 2020s. Moreover, from this chapter, we get to know that Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen has developed a socio-semiotic framework for understanding and analyzing patient-centered care, based on Halliday's concept of register and language architecture framework. After describing how Matthiessen's model links overarching cultural ideals, such as patient-centered care with immediate contextual factors and semiotic choices made by social actors in clinical settings, Neda Karimi agrees on the model's effort to incorporate the contributions of both the patient and the doctor and its potential to represent patient-centered care more comprehensively than previous frameworks. In addition, the chapter shows that Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen has played a role in research capacity building and mentorship in health communication research, guiding emerging researchers in this field.

Chapter 6, drafted by Donna R. Miller, discusses Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's contribution to the theory and practice of "verbal art", which is less prominent than those in other fields. The chapter illustrates that with the aim of comprehensively characterizing discursive engagement with literature, Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen builds upon the foundational contributions of Halliday and Hasan in verbal art studies, revisiting and extending their legacy. It elaborates on how he underscores the need to examine any work of verbal art from multiple perspectives and elucidates the fundamental semiotic dimensions of the comprehensive SFL framework that underpins verbal art theory and its practical application. Donna R. Miller proposes in the chapter that Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's most innovative development in the study of verbal art involves the application of "registerial cartography", which entails a classification of fields of activity within a given context. She mentioned that in Matthiessen's analysis, literature is viewed as a text that operates within contexts where the primary activity is the "recreating" of aspects of life. His study includes the sub-register of the discourse *about* literature, which deals with its value. What's more, the chapter depicts Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's treatment of

verbal art as a meaning subpotential of the overall meaning potential of a language and proposes the placement of this component along the cline of instantiation.

Chapter 7, written by Ernest S. Akerejola, presents the significant contributions Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen made to the development of SFL in Australia with regard to teaching, research, mentorship, and the growth of the SFL school in the country. The chapter starts with an overview of how SFL emerged and evolved in Australia. It began with the migration of Michael A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan to Sydney in 1976, and Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's arrival further strengthened the SFL community in Australia. From the chapter, we get to know that as a Professor of Linguistics at Macquarie University, Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen expanded linguistic courses and promoted collaboration between linguistics and other fields of study. Besides, he was a founding member of the Centre for Language in Social Life (CLSL) and facilitated the establishment of systemic linguistic typological research groups across and beyond Australia. The chapter speaks highly of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's humane intellectualism, which was evident in his mentoring strategies and consultation method, where he showed empathy, support, and genuine interest in his students and colleagues. Therefore, the chapter concludes that it is Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's impact on SFL in Australia and his contributions to the field that position him as one of the greatest linguists of the 21st century.

Chapter 8, contributed by Jesús David Guerra Lyons, reviews the impact of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's work on the Latin American SFL community, focusing on citations of his work and its application and expansion by scholars in Latin America. According to the chapter, Latin America has been an emerging hotspot for SFL over the last two decades, especially since the inauguration of the Latin American Systemic Functional Linguistics Association (ALSFAL) in 2007. The chapter illustrates that the growing spread of SFL in the region owes to its applicability to a variety of research problems and domains, such as in the face of social, environmental, and semiotic challenges. Quantitative indicators presented in the chapter show the frequency of citations of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's work by Latin American scholars, the distribution of citations across Latin American nations, and the most cited works by Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen in the region. On this basis, the chapter further analyzes how scholars apply, advance, or complement Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's work, and the nature of their engagement with his work. The findings reveal that Latin American scholars' engagement with Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's work is diverse, covering various areas such as grammar, applicable discourse analysis, language typology, translation, multisemiotic registers, and healthcare communication. At the end of this chapter, it is suggested that scholars could further engage with Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's theoretical proposals, apply reasoning strategies more explicitly, and broaden and diversify the areas of application.

Chapter 9, also the final chapter, authored by Jorge Arús-Hita, covers both the physical presence of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen in Europe and publications that have made a major impact on European researchers. The chapter traces Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's journey and finds that it was mostly westwards, from Sweden to California, then further west into Sydney and Hong Kong, with visits to various European countries. Jorge Arús-Hita states in the chapter that the connection between Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen and Europe is reciprocal as his early years in Sweden allowed him to become acquainted with relevant linguistic theories and prominent European linguists, which influenced his development as a linguist. Moreover, the chapter points out that some of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's research areas such as systemic-functional theory and metatheory, theoretical and computational models of semiotic systems and multilinguality are strongly associated with European countries. Also, Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's collaborations with researchers in Germany, Finland, Denmark, Spain, Italy, and other European countries have contributed to the dissemination of his ideas in Europe. Finally, the chapter also discusses Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's career-long collaboration and co-teaching with Michael A. K. Halliday, which has left a lasting mark and deeply influenced the development of SFL ideas in Europe.

Overall, in terms of chapter arrangement, this collection is well structured, starting from theory to application and finally to some supplementary materials. These chapters are somewhat interwoven and they actually reinforce each other, together constituting a coherent collection. This collection stands out from other similar books by presenting the development of SFL in close connection to Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's achievements, which serves as a wonderful addition and complement to his previous volume *The collected works of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen* (Matthiessen 2021). As a foundation for the series of collected works of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, *The collected works of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen* provides an overview of the major theoretical and analytical constructs of SFL, making it easily comprehensible for inexperienced researchers. By contrast, the orientation of this book is to provide an in-depth exploration of the theoretical foundations and applications of SFL as embodied in the work of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen. Therefore, the target readership of this book would be researchers and students who have some grounding in SFL studies and want to expand their understanding of its development through the lens of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's contributions. For beginners who have little knowledge of SFL, it is recommended that before reading this collection they could refer to some introductory books on SFL first, such as *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar* (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014) and *Deploying functional grammar* (Martin et al. 2010). Impressively, in the introductory part, the central themes of each chapter of the book are linked to Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's publication and a series of interviews with him in the form of a table (Table 0.1) by editors, which functions as a great guide for readers who would like to further appreciate Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's

work and academic thoughts. It thus leads to a universe of SFL centered on the work and academic ideas of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen. In addition to the comprehensive surveys in each chapter, directions for future studies are also pointed out, which hopefully can inspire the readers to a certain extent. Besides, as this collection is jointly authored by a group of renowned scholars in the field of SFL, readers can taste subtle differences in writing styles between different chapters in one book. As the central figure of this collection, Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen himself also contributes a chapter and even provides an extra personal angle to complement other chapters. In doing so, the collection successfully avoids a drawback common to similar books and enables readers to get the full picture by hearing the voice of both the other people and the core figure.

Despite the above merits, this book also has some imperfections. As a significant collection outlining Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's contributions to SFL, it covers a very limited number of topics among all the achievements made by the outstanding linguist. Having been working in this field for decades, Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen has reached a wide range of domains in his research. Perhaps due to constraints of the space, topics such as Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST), text generation and artificial intelligence, (critical) discourse analysis, the architecture of language, translation studies, computational linguistics, and educational linguistics are not elaborated in this book in spite of Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's quite influential accomplishment in these areas. As a result, readers have to turn to Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen's other works if they want to explore the topics mentioned above. For example, regarding translation studies, Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen locates translation in an ordered typology of systems and comes up with the concept "the environments of translation" (Matthiessen 2001, 2021b). Also, in *Systemic linguistics and text generation: Experiences from Japanese and English* (Matthiessen and Bateman 1991), Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen clearly presents his academic ideas in the field of computational linguistics. Under the circumstances, we therefore look forward to a sequel in the future, which may provide a more comprehensive picture of his prolific career.

To conclude, despite the potential areas of improvement, this collection deserves high recommendation for its unique status, rich information, and valuable insights from Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen himself and other well-recognized scholars in the field of SFL.

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