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# A review of interpersonal metafunction studies in systemic functional linguistics (2012–2022)

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**Abstract:** Substantial research has drawn upon the notion of interpersonal metafunction proposed by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to approach the interpersonal meanings construed in different contexts. However, there is a lack of review on the recent research of this domain. The objective of this paper is to survey the patterns and trends of literature on interpersonal metafunction in SFL tradition and guide future research. This paper reviews 160 studies published from 2012 to 2022. Four themes emerge from the review: theoretical explorations, multilingual studies, discourse analysis, and language education. These contributions shed light on the applicability and flexibility of SFL as a theoretical tool across a wide range of genres and languages. The four streams of research are guided by the fundamental concepts of SFL and interrelated by the concept of context and the tenet of language as social semiotic. Future directions lie in theoretical model refinement, methodological developments, typological descriptions of interpersonal grammar, and the extension of application areas.

**Keywords:** interpersonal meaning; interpersonal metafunction; social relation; systemic functional linguistics; theoretical development

## 1 Introduction

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a social semiotic theory of language developed by Michael A. K. Halliday and his followers that attempts to account for the structural, social, and developmental features of language within a single coherent framework (Bartlett and O’Grady 2017). This theory is centered on functions of language, which are realized by meaning potentials, or linguistic systems. SFL holds that language construes three strands of meanings simultaneously: ideational meaning for representing human experience, interpersonal meaning for enacting

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social relation, and textual meaning for creating relevance to context (Halliday 1994; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). These three strands of meanings are termed in systemic functional grammar as metafunctions. Of the three metafunctions, the interpersonal one is defined by Halliday (2005 [1970]) as a function by which language speakers participate in speech events, make comments, and take up communication roles. Establishing interpersonal relation between language users is “one of the most basic functions of language” (Lemke 1998: 33).

Central to Halliday’s account of interpersonal metafunction is the clausal grammar, making room for more interpersonal research below, above and beyond clause. In attempts to develop the account of interpersonal metafunction in the context of SFL, since 1990s James R. Martin and his associates embarked upon devising “a comprehensive framework for analyzing evaluation in discourse” (Martin 2003: 171). Martin (2000) proposed the interpersonal semantic system of APPRAISAL<sup>1</sup> which construe, amplify and engage with evaluative meanings. The most elaborated account of Appraisal framework to date was the seminal monograph *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English* (Martin and White 2005). The overall APPRAISAL comprises three interconnected systems: ATTITUDE dealing with speakers’ or writers’ feelings and opinions, ENGAGEMENT entailing the choices of attributing attitudes to particular sources, and GRADUATION concerning the degree and boundary of evaluations (Martin and White 2005). This framework “has opened up areas of interpersonal meanings that had been relatively neglected within Systemic Functional Linguistics [...]” (Thompson 2008: 169). The model extends the prosodic pattern of interpersonal meanings to lexico-semantic subcategorization of appraisal meanings (Davidse and Simon-Vandenbergen 2008).

In addition to APPRAISAL, NEGOTIATION is the other interpersonal discourse semantic system which pertains to speech function and exchange structure (Martin and Rose 2007). NEGOTIATION functions to designate speech roles to interactants and organize semantic moves into sequences as exchange structure. NEGOTIATION is related to SPEECH FUNCTION: both of them enact interaction in dialogue but they are situated in different ranks at the discourse semantic stratum (Martin and Rose 2007). NEGOTIATION is in the exchange rank while SPEECH FUNCTION in the move rank. SPEECH FUNCTION is realized through the interpersonal system of MOOD at the lexicogrammatical stratum. Eggins and Slade (2006 [1997]) formalized an analytical scheme in the tradition of SFL to explore discourse semantic moves in casual conversation.

SFL is deemed as an “extravagant” theory in terms of its constructs, purposes, and scope. The divergent elements in this architecture are unified to serve the twofold functions: acting with and thinking with language. However, despite the growing convergence between the basic concepts of this theory, “Convergence with

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<sup>1</sup> Following typographic conventions in SFL, names of systems are presented in small capitals.

respect to interpersonal meaning has been slower to develop" (Martin 2018: 16–17). To develop such a convergence, it is of great importance to review the existing scholarship and illuminate the state of the art in this realm. Andersen (2017) compared and problematized the descriptions of interpersonal meanings by Halliday's *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (IFG) and Fawcett's Cardiff Grammar. He also delineated some brief reflections and future work on the interpersonal meaning of the clause. Oteíza (2017) and Hood (2019) reviewed the applications and directions of APPRAISAL framework in diverse fields of subjects, languages and genres. There are some overviews and surveys of the research activities of different areas in SFL, such as discourse analysis (Martin 2009; Schleppegrell 2012), language description, comparison, and typology (Mwinlaaru and Xuan 2016; Teruya and Matthiessen 2015), language teaching (Gebhard 2010; Schwarz and Hamman-Ortiz 2020), the overall new directions of SFL (Matthiessen 2009). None of these reviews pinpointed the studies that concentrated on interpersonal metafunction.

Given the growing body of SFL-informed studies on interpersonal metafunction, a review of such literature is a pressing concern. Different from Andersen's (2017) review of interpersonal metafunction on the clause rank, this article extends the scope of focus and investigates the research concerning all levels and ranks of language. The questions guiding this review are:

- (1) What are the streams of research into interpersonal metafunction in SFL tradition?
- (2) What are the theoretical developments achieved by the research?
- (3) What are the major findings and implications of each stream of research?
- (4) What are the future directions of research?

Specifically, this review is interested in the model that social relation is enacted in actual language use, with the hope of informing thinking about language and working on other things from interpersonal perspective. That is a response to Halliday's pursuit of applicable theory: "To me a theory has always meant a strategic tool, a problem-solving device, a guide to action" (Halliday 2008: 15). Importantly, this review aims to characterize how the interpersonal framework of SFL has been refined and developed. Though SFL is a fully-fledged linguistic model, it is still in the course of development.

## 2 Methods

### 2.1 Inclusion criteria

To answer the above research questions, the following inclusion criteria were constructed to specify which studies would be selected and analyzed:

- (1) Being published in peer-reviewed journals or as monographs or book chapters between 2012 and August 2022, excluding unpublished theses or dissertations;
- (2) Being published in English;
- (3) Drawing on the notions of interpersonal metafunction of SFL;
- (4) Being centralized on interpersonal metafunction.

The data range of the literature search was restricted between 2012 and August 2022, which did not mean that the publications previous to 2012 were meaningless or valueless. The latest literature might be more closely related to the current situation and supply more insights (Xiao and Watson 2019), so this review concentrated on the publications during the past decade. There are other linguistic models than SFL that address the interpersonal meaning of language. Literature that was situated outside the context of SFL was deemed as irrelevant to the research questions of this paper. Based on my personal experience in reading literature, some studies just touched upon the interpersonal metafunction which might not shed light on the current review. Therefore, the studies to be included must take interpersonal metafunction as their foci.

## 2.2 Search terms

The search terms used for this review included “Systemic Functional Linguistics”, “SFL”, “Systemic Functional Grammar”, “interpersonal metafunction”, “interpersonal meaning”, “interpersonal resource”, “tenor”, “Appraisal”, “evaluation”, “negotiation”, “speech function”, and “mood”.

SFL is a linguistic theory structured by meaning potential which treats language as a meaning-making system. There is no clear line between semantics and grammar (Halliday 1994). Halliday saw himself as a grammarian (2008) whose aim was constructing a functional model of grammar, which could be inferred from the title of his masterpiece *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (Halliday 1994). Therefore, “Systemic Functional Grammar” was used as a supplementary term for “Systemic Functional Linguistics”. The choices by language systems, or semantic resources, construe all the three strands of meanings, including interpersonal meaning. The exploration of interpersonal meaning inevitably involves the study of interpersonal resource. Hence both “interpersonal meaning” and “interpersonal resource” were employed as search terms. Situation of context constrains meaning-making in terms of three parameters, of which tenor is the one that concerns the relationships between language users and interpersonal metafunction. So “tenor” was added as a search term. NEGOTIATION and APPRAISAL were two main interpersonal semantic systems (Martin and Rose 2007), and both of them were chosen as search terms. As the first

section of this article presented, the impetus of APPRAISAL was the analysis of evaluation resources in language and the ways how they are attributed and graded (Martin and White 2005). The term “evaluation” was an umbrella concept, so it was subsumed into the list of search terms. SPEECH FUNCTION was another interpersonal semantic system functioning as meaning potential in an exchange of information or goods-&-services (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). Furthermore, SPEECH FUNCTION was realized by the lexicogrammatical system of MOOD. Therefore, “speech function” and “mood” were used as search terms.

## 2.3 Data collection and selection

The literature search was performed by means of Web of Science, EBSCOhost, and ProQuest, three accessible databases frequently used by scholars. The process of literature search and filter was conducted in four stages: a comprehensive database search for journal articles, then full text screening and back and forward reference searching, and finally purposeful searching for monographs and book chapters.

During the first stage, a comprehensive search was carried out to identify potentially relevant journal articles from the three databases. The search terms were combined with Boolean operators “AND”, “OR”, and parentheses to construct the search string: (Systemic Functional Linguistics OR Systemic Functional Grammar OR SFL) AND (interpersonal metafunction OR interpersonal meaning OR interpersonal resource OR tenor OR negotiation OR appraisal OR evaluation OR speech function OR mood). The search on EBSCOhost, ProQuest, and Web of Science respectively yielded 314, 103, and 394 articles. The RIS files containing the titles and abstracts of those 811 articles were downloaded and imported into the software EndNote 20.2.1. The software identified and removed 228 duplicates, leaving a total of 583 articles. The titles and abstracts of these preliminary results were scanned to decide whether they match the inclusion criteria or not. Some publications were excluded as they were not relevant to the theme of this review (e.g. Aerts 2018). In addition, the articles published in reputable indexed journals were retained in order to focus on the representative ones since “the major contributions are likely to be in the leading journals” (Webster and Watson 2002: xvi). Then an initial list of 120 articles was established for further screening.

During the second stage, the full texts of those articles were skimmed to further assess their relevance and eligibility. Some articles were removed from the review as their scope was beyond interpersonal metafunction (e.g. Kilpatrick and Wolbers 2020). A few articles which did not focus on interpersonal metafunction might not provide sufficient detail to this review and were ruled out. A total of 91 papers were collected at the end of the second stage.

The third stage was an iterative process in case some eligible articles were missed. I performed backward and forward search by reading the references and citations of the articles already collected. 26 additional studies meeting the inclusion criteria were located in this way. A finalized list of journal literature consisted of 117 articles.

The fourth and last stage was a process for searching monographs and book chapters. Initially, this process was conducted through the above three databases, but the results were not satisfactory because some of the relevant monographs or edited books we knew or once read were missed. Thus searching for monographs and book chapters was conducted separately. Informed by our knowledge of SFL book publishing, we purposively searched the database of friendly publishers (John Benjamins, Routledge, Bloomsbury, Springer, Equinox, and Peter Lang) for SFL-related books. The contents and introductions of the detected books were looked through to further select relevant literature. In addition, back and forward reference reading was conducted again through journal papers and book chapters to locate relevant literature. In this way, we acquired 39 book chapters and 4 monographs meeting the inclusion criteria. At last, the total number of studies for the coding procedure and data analysis was 160. Although selective in the data collection and selection, the 160 works were believed to be relevant and representative which offered answers to the research questions.

## 2.4 Data analysis

A three-cycle inductive coding was conducted to derive categories and themes from the data. First, the articles reviewed were skimmed to establish an overall categorization to which “holistic coding” (Saldaña 2015: 166) was applied. Under the guidance of the two research questions, four macro-level categories were iteratively recognized: theoretical explorations, multilingual studies, discourse analysis, and language education. These categories, or macro-level codes, would be the headings in the next section of research findings. The research into language education is an active domain that includes a great many publications. Though studies of language education are subsumed into multilingual studies in some works (Matthiessen 2009; Matthiessen et al. 2008), this stream of research is still extracted from multilingual studies and reviewed separately.

Second, under these macro-level codes “*in vivo coding*” (Saldaña 2015: 105) was employed for a more detailed categorization. Salient and important words and phrases from the articles were used as *in vivo* codes, or first-level codes. These codes were further sorted and grouped into second-level codes that were more conceptual and theoretical.

Third, these second-level codes were thematized into the macro-level codes (third-level codes) to derive the structures and lines of the existing scholarship, which was demonstrated in the next section. The codebook (see Appendix) comprising macro-level (third-level) and second-level codes was generated in this way. It was noted that there were some overlaps between these categories and themes since they were not absolutely exclusive from each other.

### 3 Findings

In this section, the findings of the literature review are reported under the four headings or macro-level categories. The report is guided by the research questions. We begin with an overview of several important characteristics of the studies included in this review. Then the pattern and trend of each theme and subtheme will be illustrated by some emblematic studies. The four categories are not totally separated from one another since there are some intersections between them. Some papers are cited twice or more in different categories as their findings attend to plural themes.

#### 3.1 Theoretical explorations

Theoretical development often went hand in hand with the applications of SFL theories. Tens of works reorganized and amended the SFL interpersonal framework from theoretical dimensions of stratification, instantiation, realization, rank, delicacy, and axis. Some studies attempted to promote the collaboration of SFL with other theories and disciplines. Moreover, a few papers addressed the methodological issues with contributions to analytic methods. Figure 1 presents the frequency of studies of theoretical explorations.

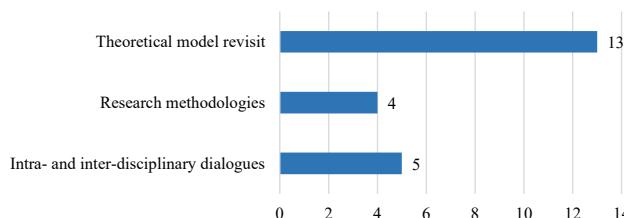


Figure 1: Frequency of studies of theoretical explorations (total number = 22).

### 3.1.1 Theoretical model revisit

SFL is still a fledgling theory, and it is necessary to revisit and develop its theoretical model. To address this gap, scholars have promoted the theoretical developments of the “IFG model” and the “Sydney Model” (Bartlett and O’Grady 2017) in terms of interpersonal metafunction. The developments within the “IFG model” reconsider the interpersonal systems at different strata, rank scale, and delicacy (Halliday 1994; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). The progresses within the “Sydney Model” refine the APPRAISAL framework and revisit the Appraisal categories because this model is not supposed to be applied mechanically (Martin and White 2005). Some researchers attempted to refine ATTITUDE (Benitez-Castro and Hidalgo-Tenorio 2022; Hommerberg and Don 2015; Lluch 2022; Smirnova 2022; Su and Hunston 2019), APPRAISAL (Almutairi 2021), implicit evaluation (Jiang and Zhang 2020) and SPEECH FUNCTION (Fuller 2018), MOVE (Elabdali 2022), MEDIATION (Martin and Dreyfus 2015) at the semantics stratum as well as contextual systems (Butt et al. 2021; O’Donnell 2020; Wang 2022).

There were some studies that refined APPRAISAL to a greater delicacy. For instance, Smirnova (2022) reworked the three attitudinal systems, viz. AFFECT, JUDGMENT, and APPRECIATION, to include more nuanced subcategories. The reworked ATTITUDE enabled a nuanced analysis of evaluative devices in hotel ratings. Su and Hunston (2019) remodeled the ATTITUDE system as being consisted of two simultaneously-chosen subsystems, ATTITUDINAL LEXIS and ATTITUDINAL TARGET. Benitez-Castro and Hidalgo-Tenorio (2022) formulated a refined ATTITUDE system incorporating a psychology-informed EMOTION subsystem in tandem with OPINION system to depict discursive features of media texts. Hommerberg and Don (2015) established a fine-grained APPRECIATION subsystem for analyzing the abundant aesthetic evaluations in review discourse.

Some papers dealt with evaluative semantics to a less delicacy. Jiang and Zhang (2020) proposed an analytical framework of implicit evaluation which comprised VALUE, SITUATION, and REASONING. These systems collaborated in a three-dimension vector model to determine the choice of implicit evaluation. Almutairi (2021) profiled the probabilistic distribution and deviation of the least delicate choices of ENGAGEMENT and ATTITUDE POLARITY.

Some papers focused on the other interpersonal semantic system, NEGOTIATION, and refined it from the perspective of rank and delicacy. For example, Martin and Dreyfus (2015) proposed an additional rank called maneuver above exchange at the discourse semantic stratum. They recognized six kinds of maneuver which were modeled as MEDIATION system. It followed that in the interpersonal discourse semantics, there were three ranks (move, exchange, and maneuver) that were realized respectively by three systems (SPEECH FUNCTION, NEGOTIATION, and MEDIATION).

From a trinocular vision (Halliday 1996), the interpersonal systems at the semantics stratum interacted with those at the higher stratum. Butt et al. (2021) formalized two Tenor systems for explicating the social interactions of participants in professional contexts. The first system was SOCIAL DISTANCE concerning social similarity and connections of participants. The second, SOCIAL HIERARCHY, dealt with status and power relations. Wang (2022) argued that the interrelation between discourse semantics and context was bidirectional motivation. Wang proposed the EMOTION system at the context stratum, which construed emotional values with three choices: experiencer, stimulator, and outsider. Taking into consideration the dynamic nature of Tenor (O'Donnell 2020), the contextual systems should be dynamic too.

Taken as a whole, the publications theoretically problematized the SFL interpersonal model. It was a pressing concern to develop a more nuanced conceptualization of interpersonal systems, rank scale, delicacy, and interstratal realizations. Particularly the interpersonal systems at the semantics and context strata had been refined so as to improve their explanatory potential.

### 3.1.2 Research methodologies

SFL-informed text analysis can be conducted through manual analysis, automated analysis, or both. In either manual or automated text analysis, collecting and analyzing qualitative or quantitative data is a vexing issue. Oteíza (2017) outlined the methodological difficulties that concerned the analytical potential of Appraisal framework: differentiating implicit and explicit attitudes, recognizing cumulative and prosodic pattern of evaluation, and tackling the language-, cultural-, and register-specific features of evaluation. The challenging methodological issues of analyzing interpersonal meanings resulted in the development of annotation guideline (Fuoli 2018) and standard (Read and Carroll 2012), analytic method (Martin et al. 2021) and software (Almutairi 2013).

Manual annotation of evaluative meanings was complex, context-sensitive, and subjective. To approach this demanding task, Fuoli (2018) embarked on a stepwise annotation guideline that consisted of seven steps from annotation scheme creation to final data analysis. The method supported the analysts by rendering manual coding of evaluative resources more reliable, replicable, and robust. Also focusing on the annotation of evaluative resource, Read and Carroll (2012) proposed a gold standard of Appraisal analysis which corresponded to the six levels of the APPRAISAL framework. This standard could facilitate the automated identification and classification of evaluation as well as inter-annotator agreement.

Martin et al. (2021) delineated the descriptive methodology of SFL-informed language typology in terms of text-based grammatical description, trinocular vision, approaching grammar from above, and axial reasoning.

Almutairi (2013) presented a software named AppAnn to model the logogenetic pattern of discourse. AppAnn mapped attitudinal patterns via three techniques which represented multiple attitudinal values at a logogenetic time. The application of AppAnn proved that it could support discourse analysts by way of coding and visualizing complex evaluative patterns in long-range texts.

### 3.1.3 Intra- and inter-disciplinary dialogues

The last years have witnessed some inter- and intra-disciplinary dialogues between SFL and other disciplines and linguistic approaches. The intra-disciplinary dialogue of SFL with corpus linguistics and language typology is highly fruitful. SFL also collaborates with Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), a sociological approach to understanding and shaping social practice (Martin et al. 2020), which pushes forward the theoretical development of SFL.

Language typology is closely related to functional linguistics in broad sense. Modern language typology, or more precisely Greenbergian typology, is seen as “(functional-) typological approach” (Croft 2003: 2). As a branch of functionalist linguistics, SFL integrates with language typology and breeds systemic functional typology (Caffarel et al. 2004; Martin et al. 2021; Mwinlaaru and Xuan 2016). SFL offers descriptive parameters and analytic tools to language typology; linguistic universals and variations in typology support the theoretical innovations of SFL since it is a general theory of language. As far as interpersonal metafunction is concerned, a set of questions deserve our consideration in systemic functional typological work (Martin 2018; Martin et al. 2021). These concerns could be used as descriptive and comparative motifs on particular languages and in an attempt to make typological generalizations across languages.

It has been a tradition for SFL to interact with sociology since Halliday’s work on child language development features “the dialogue he established between linguistics and other fields, particularly sociology” (Williams 2019: 488). Martin et al. (2020) connected SFL with two dimensions of LCT: specialization and semantics. Specialization dealt with structures of knowledge and knowers, while semantics pertained to semantic gravity and density. These LCT concepts and SFL interpersonal framework could be used to address issues such as social relations and knowledge exchange. Based on the notion of axiological constellations in LCT, Doran (2020) formulated a method of analyzing implicit evaluation in five steps.

Corpus linguistics provided tools that supported the development of SFL theories and descriptions (Sharoff 2017). SFL conceived lexis as the most delicate grammar, which created the interface between corpus-aided investigation from lexical end with that from grammatical end. The complementarity of the two perspectives was

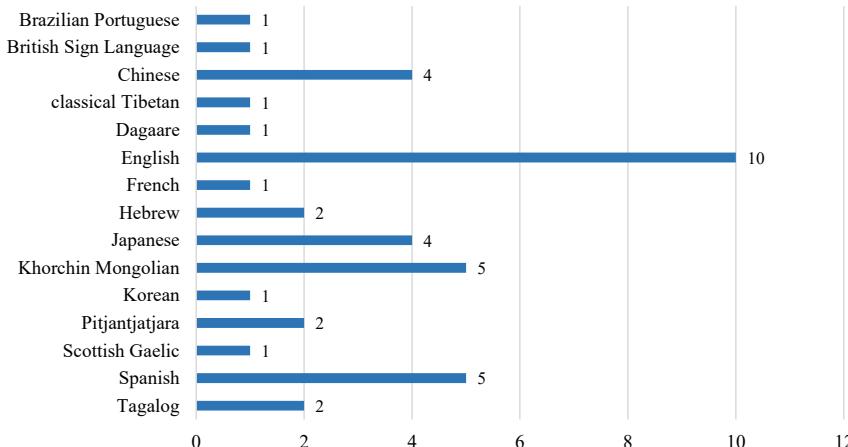
substantiated by some research into interpersonal lexicogrammatical resources (e.g. Almutairi 2021; Smirnova 2022). In summary, SFL scholars made attempts to interact with other linguistic approaches and disciplines. Inter- and intra-disciplinary dialogues became potential breakthrough for theoretical developments of SFL within the domain of interpersonal metafunction.

## 3.2 Multilingual studies

The domain of multilingual studies includes language typology, language description, language comparison, translation and interpreting studies, and foreign/second language education (Matthiessen 2009; Matthiessen et al. 2008). These multilingual issues are concerned with multilingual phenomena of either language as instance (text) or language as potential (system) along the cline of instantiation. Thus, they are interrelated in one way or another and could be brought together. Dozens of publications investigated how interpersonal systems and structures instantiated as unfolding texts in contexts. These contributions included language description and comparison as well as translation and interpreting studies. The first subgroup was concerned with the interpersonal resources of individual languages in specific contexts, focusing on morphology, lexical items, clausal structures, grammatical systems, and tenor. The second dealt with the recreation of interpersonal meanings from source text to target text in the written, spoken, and intermediate modes.

### 3.2.1 Language description and comparison

Language description and comparison guided by SFL are usually text-based and start with the analyses of particular texts. Language description deals with grammatical systems and structures of one individual language in specific contexts. Language comparison concerns the similarities and differences among two or more languages. Though the construction of the framework of SFL was initiated with the descriptions of English and Chinese, the typological work within SFL had been extended to cover an increasing number of languages over the years. The publications in this group described and compared the interpersonal meaning construal and social relation enactment of several languages in particular contexts. These descriptions often used transfer comparison, a technique “to model the description of one language on the description of another” (Caffarel et al. 2004: 15). The publications could be clustered into four subgroups from the perspective of stratification: phonology, lexicogrammar, semantics and above, and grammatical metaphor. Figure 2 presents the number of studies across languages.



**Figure 2:** Number of studies across languages (total frequency of studies = 41; total frequency of languages = 15; comparative studies are counted twice).

### 3.2.1.1 Phonology

Just a few papers approached interpersonal metafunction of phonology in specific languages. Speakers of Pitjantjatjara deployed tone contours, modal items, and mood choices to realize speech functions and configure exchanges (Rose 2018). Rudge (2021) approached British Sign Language, a visual-spatial modality. He outlined the phonetic systems (MANUAL, NON-MANUAL, and SPATIO-KINETIC) and phonological system (VISUAL-SPATIAL), which were pivotal in the selection of Mood types.

### 3.2.1.2 Lexicogrammar

Focusing on the lexicogrammar stratum, some works approached the interpersonal meanings realized by lexical items and clauses in Brazilian Portuguese (Figueiredo 2021), Chinese (Wang 2021; Yang 2021a, 2021b), classical Tibetan (Wang 2020), Dagaare (Mwinlaaru 2018), English (Jing 2021; Kim 2017; Kimps et al. 2019; Lastres-López 2020; Millar and Hunston 2015; Xiang and Liu 2018), French (Banks 2017), Hebrew (Dyck 2020), Japanese (Iimura 2021; Kadooka 2021; Teruya 2017), Kharchin Mongolian (Zhang 2020a, 2020b, 2021a), Korean (Shin 2018), Scottish Gaelic (Bartlett 2021), Spanish (Arús-Hita 2021; Oteíza et al. 2021; Quiroz 2018, 2021), and Tagalog (Martin and Cruz 2018, 2021).

Some papers examined the interpersonal metafunction realized by specific morphology and lexical items. For example, Oteíza et al. (2021) trinocularly accounted for the prominent role Spanish suffixes played in graduating evaluations. The suffixes *-ada* and *-azo* mainly intensified time and event incongruently, while the

suffixes *-ísimo/a/s* tended to intensify qualities and quantify as amount and extent in a congruent manner. Martin and Cruz (2021) systemized Tagalog clitics resources into the retrospective and prospective ASSESSMENT systems that enact consensus in negotiation. Zhang inspected the interpersonal relations enacted by certain morphology and lexical items in Khorchin Mongolian. The linguistic resources for dialogic positioning in conversations included negation, conjunctions, adverbs, projections, and modal particles (Zhang 2020a). The resources engaged speakers with alternative viewpoints temporally and adjusted the dialogic space spatially. More specifically, four modal particles enacted primary knower roles for speakers but casted distinct status of knowledge of information to addressees (Zhang 2020b). In this language modal particles and interrogative particles usually co-occurred with the morphological realizations of TENSE system in different types of mood (Zhang 2021a). Yang (2021a) argued that Chinese modal verbs situating initially, medially, and finally in clause functioned respectively as Predicator or Modality to convey the speaker's evaluation. Jing (2021) examined two types of interjections realizing minor and major speech functions respectively in English film subtitles. A network was proposed to systemize the functions performed by interjections. Kim (2017) examined the interactive properties of the single, independent *really* in English conversations.

Moving to clause along the rank scale, a few articles analyzed interpersonal meanings of specific clausal structures in particular languages. Lastres-López (2020) proposed a nuanced twofold taxonomy of interpersonal *if*-conditionals. The clauses were grouped into seven types according to their subfunctions and two types in terms of engagement/stance. Kimp et al. (2019) probed into the interactional functions of English tag questions demanding information or action by two approaches: speech functions and exchange structure. Another type of clause studied was *Let's*-construction by Xiang and Liu (2018). Underpinned by Cardiff Grammar, they investigated the mood meaning and syntactic properties of *Let's*-construction. The basic syntactic structures of this construction were “*Let element ^ Subject*” and “*Operator ^ Let element*”.

Some studies reconsidered the mood structures in specific languages in comparison with that of English. Banks (2017) proposed an alternative mood structure in French (negotiator and remainder) and the realizations of modality. Arús-Hita (2021) proposed that the SPCA structure (Subject, Finite, Predicator, Complement, Adjunct) did not realize interpersonal metafunction in Spanish communicative exchange as it did in English. This structure was integrated within logical metafunction as syntactic structure to describe the interpersonal metafunction of both languages. Relatedly, Quiroz (2018, 2021) demonstrated that in Spanish Predicator, rather than Subject or Finite, affords the dialogic exchange of proposition and proposal. Speech functions in Spanish were realized by MOOD system in which imperative clause had three options:

jussive, hortative, and optative. Dyck (2020) compared biblical Hebrew and English with respect to mood structures. In biblical Hebrew, indicative clause differed from interrogative clause in terms of word ordering, markedness of subject and interrogative particles.

Some works focused on grammatical systems and illustrated their structural realizations. Shin (2018) profiled the FORMALITY system in Korean which was fundamental for realizing interpersonal metafunction. Its realizations syntagmatically were structured with the systems of POLARITY, MODALITY, VOCATION, and PARTICIPANT DEFERENCE. In Tagalog, the negotiations of proposition and proposal as well as evaluation drew on resources from several interpersonal systems, including MOOD, POLARITY, MODALITY, TAGGING, VOCATION, COMMENT, and ASSESSMENT (Martin and Cruz 2018). These systems were realized by tone, clause, and lexis. Yang (2021b) delineated the system of MODALITY in Chinese in terms of its types and realizations. Wang (2021) adopted a trinocular perspective to characterize the interpersonal clausal system of MOOD in Mandarin Chinese which realizes both the NEGOTIATION and ENGAGEMENT systems. Some papers described the MOOD and MODALITY systems of Japanese and compared them with that of English (Iimura 2021; Kadooka 2021; Teruya 2017). Figueiredo (2021) addressed MOOD in Brazilian Portuguese out of a trinocular view. Zhang (2021c) described the MOOD system of Khorchin Mongolian which was realized by the negotiatory structure of clause. It is noteworthy that the Predicator played a central role in MOOD choices in Spanish (Quiroz 2018, 2021), Mandarin (Wang 2021), and Brazilian Portuguese (Figueiredo 2021).

To sum up, the descriptions and comparisons above contributed to the descriptive and typological generalization as to how various languages construed interpersonal meanings at both instance and potential poles of the cline of instantiation. Considerable works adopted a trinocular vision and proposed lexicogrammatical systems with reference to other strata. The conceptualization of interpersonal meaning potentials and functional configurations within the lexicogrammatical stratum became more explicit and comprehensive.

### 3.2.1.3 Semantics and above

Some works threw light on discourse semantic and contextual systems in individual languages, including Hebrew (Fuller 2018), Khorchin Mongolian (Zhang 2021b, 2021c), and Pitjantjatjara (Rose 2021).

Fuller (2018) refined the SPEECH FUNCTION system of Hebrew to analyze the Old Testament. Because the morphological system of Hebrew was different from that of English, Fuller adapted Halliday's MOOD and SPEECH FUNCTION. Biblical Hebrew realized four speech functions: assertion, assumption, projection, and projection with volitive force. Zhang (2021b, 2021c) formalized MOVE and NEGOTIATION systems of Khorchin Mongolian conversation. The selections from the MOVE was conditioned by the

interlocutors' knowledge of information. NEGOTIATION interacted with the MOOD system and the negotiatory structure at clause rank. Rose (2021) elucidated the way that the semantic systems (SPEECH FUNCTION, NEGOTIATION, and APPRAISAL) were realized by the interstratal coupling of TONE and MOOD in Pitjantjatjara. These linguistic systems, together with Pitjantjatjara kinship terms, realized the system of kin relations, or tenor, at the contextual level of register (Rose 2018). To summarize, these papers and books chapters described semantic and contextual systems of particular languages in detail. Importantly, they sketched the interstratal realization of semantic and contextual systems from a trinocular vision.

### 3.2.1.4 Grammatical metaphor

Grammatical metaphor (GM) was conceived as "a remapping of the semantics onto the lexicogrammar" (Halliday 1998: 192) and tensions between these two strata (Martin 1997). Thus the research into GM was grouped together as parallel to the previous two groups. The relevant contributions addressed issues of categorizing and identifying interpersonal GM in Chinese (Yang 2013), English (He 2021; Liardét 2018; Taverniers 2018; Yang 2019), Japanese (Fukuda 2021), and Spanish (Castro and Oteíza 2022).

GM was sensitive to genre and register. With English health texts, Yang (2019) proposed Context-first Principle in recognizing mood metaphor. The identification of mood metaphor should also take into account the AS IF relationship between congruent and metaphorical forms. Likewise, He (2021) found that metaphors of modality in English were context-sensitive. The fiction texts favored explicit subjective modalities whereas non-fiction texts preferred explicit objective modalities. Congruent modality was metaphorized diachronically in the pathway of objectification and explicitation. Yang (2013) examined the deployment of interpersonal GM in spontaneous Chinese conversation. He also found that the use of interpersonal GM was sensitive to the conversation topic and the social relation between interlocutors.

GM was relevant to objectivity. Based on Chinese EFL learners' academic writing, Liardét (2018) developed a model of modality metaphor along two axes, objectivity and expansion. Nine forms of modality metaphor were subsumed within this model. Turning to written Spanish, Castro and Oteíza (2022) delineated a realization cline of objective modality from congruent to metaphorical end. Metaphors of modality were realized in three ways, including prepositional phrases, modality as things and relational processes with modal attributes.

GM was related to the creation and evolution of meaning. Taverniers (2018) associated interpersonal grammatical metaphor (GM) with grammaticalisation in an exploration of semogenesis. Interpersonal GM were the source of grammaticalization because they developed in the same path in terms of delicacy, metafunctions and

rank scale. To recapitulate, these studies presented a more nuanced modelling of interpersonal GM and mapped its correlation to context and the way of meaning-making.

To sum up, the language description and comparison work supported that SFL was a general theory of description to describe all languages, which was postulated by Halliday (2002 [1957]) decades ago. Such work produced materials for descriptive generalization and contributed to the development of functional language typology.

### 3.2.2 Translation and interpreting studies

SFL is a social semiotics theory concerning context-sensitive use of language. It is especially relevant to translation, a process of decoding source text and creating target text in specific context. Translation has been one of SFL research areas for a long time and interpreting studies is a fledging area. The translation and interpreting studies focusing on interpersonal metafunction could be classified with respect to the mode variable of register: studies of the written mode (Herz 2021; Llopis 2017; Munday 2017, 2021; Yu and Song 2017; Yu and Wu 2018; Yue and Wu 2022; Zhang 2013; Zhang and Pan 2015), the spoken mode (Fu and Chen 2019; Xin 2018), and intermediate mode (Munday 2012). Figure 3 presents the number of studies of each mode.



**Figure 3:** Number of studies across modes (total number = 12).

The studies of the written mode mainly applied Appraisal framework to disclose translators' attitudes and positions in target texts. For example, Zhang (2013) demonstrated that transedited news headlines were loaded with transeditors' attitudes and positions. In the process of rewriting the original headlines, the transeditors were subject to the readership, the value positions of the target culture and the news agency as well as the way of how news was communicated. Two papers examined the English translations of *Platform Sutra*, a Chinese Buddhist text involving the Zen master Huineng. Yu and Wu (2018) focused on the attitudes in the commentary peritext that was sourced from the translator's teacher, a Zen master too. The translator partly adjusted her teacher's attitudes and expressed her own

positions. However, the peritext was still publicly attributed to the teacher to create objectivity and authority. Yu and Song (2017) was a multimodal analysis of *Platform Sutra* which explored the semantic interaction between cover images and verbal texts in two English translations. Llopis (2017) identified the naturalized positions and implicit attitudes in legal opinion columns of newspapers which were difficult for translators to discern. The implication for translator training was that the study helped translators “to be aware of the traps and pitfalls that legal opinion in two languages presents to support the ‘official’ editorial line through conflict and adhesion” (Llopis 2017: 632). Another study which was of value to translator training was Herz’s (2021) account of modality shift between source text and target text. Munday (2017, 2021) addressed translator/interpreter stance-taking and intervention, to which end he proposed a model that integrated APPRAISAL and the translation construct of explicitation.

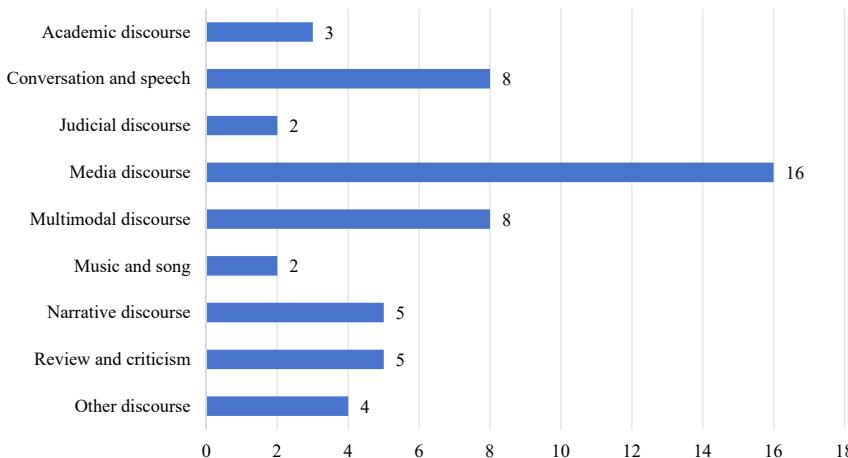
Turning to the mode of spoken language, two papers (Fu and Chen 2019; Xin 2018) studied the modalities used in Chinese government press conference interpreting to demystify the role of interpreters. The conference interpreters actively involved in the exchange of interpersonal meanings, which was evidenced by their inclination of using modalities explicitly. They played a mediation role through the shift of modalities to serve diplomatic and political purposes.

Subtitle was a kind of intermediate mode which rewrote spoken source text into written target text. Munday (2012) uncovered the evaluations in the crowdsourced subtitles of the former United States President Obama’s speech. To sum, the papers of translation and interpreting reviewed here modelled the patterns of interpersonal meanings recreated in the target texts. These works were mainly product-oriented in that they mostly concentrated on the target texts. The re-patterning of social relations operated between translators, interpreters, readers, authors of source texts and target cultures. The studies also informed the training of translator that trainees could use the SFL interpersonal heuristics to analyze the shift of interpersonal meaning in the process of translation/interpreting.

### 3.3 Discourse analysis

SFL has now been employed to study a wide spectrum of discourses in social contexts. Halliday made clear that the aim of SFL was “to construct a grammar for purposes of text analysis: one that would make it possible to say sensible and useful things about any text, spoken or written” (Halliday 1994: xv). Dozens of works adopted the interpersonal model, especially Appraisal framework, as the theoretical underpinning to analyze the exchange among language users and the enactment of social relations in different types of discourses. These contributions verified the

pliability of SFL and Appraisal framework in analyzing interpersonal metafunction across an impressive scope of genres. As will be seen, this strand of research is categorized into eight sub-themes. Most of the studies reviewed under the next heading “Language education” also dealt with discourse analysis, but they primarily meant to support language teaching and learning. The studies reviewed here were not involved with the educational end, which was a key distinction between this and the next group. Figure 4 presents the frequencies of studies across text types.



**Figure 4:** Frequency of studies across text types (total number = 53).

[Correction added after online publication, 17 December 2024: the figure has been replaced by an updated version.]

### 3.3.1 Media discourse

Some papers examined the interpersonal meanings construed in hard news (Bahmani and Alharbi 2019; Sabao 2016; Yell 2012; Zhang et al. 2022), editorials (Liu and Chang 2021; Liu and Hood 2019; Watanabe 2022; White 2021), social networks discourse (Arancibia and Montecino 2017; Harju 2016; Maíz-Arévalo and García-Gómez 2013; Ross and Caldwell 2020), and online magazine (Benítez-Castro and Hidalgo-Tenorio 2022; Mayo 2017).

Appraisal framework and Critical Discourse Analysis were employed to explore the so-called “objectivity” of hard news. For example, Sabao (2016) explored how the evaluative key evinced the authorial ideological stances in two hard news reports taken from two Zimbabwean newspapers. Similarly, through evaluative analysis, Zhang et al. (2022) unmasked the divergent ideologies hidden behind Chinese and

American news reports related to COVID-19. Bahmani and Alharbi (2019) compared the different attitudinal meanings and the hidden ideologies toward Iran's Nuclear Program in news items from CNN and Al-Jazeera English. Yell (2012) compared the different emotional positions in the news coverage of domestic and international natural disasters from the same Australian broadsheet. These studies demonstrated that Appraisal framework as a linguistic approach had much potential in examining objectivity in hard news. Readers needed to be aware that news reports should be interpreted in a critical and rational way.

Compared with hard news, editorials were usually more subjective and filled with more evaluations and ideological positions. Editorials writers used the coupling of attitudinal and ideational meanings to align potential readers into the position of an Australian newspaper (Liu and Hood 2019) and to construct positive Chinese national identities for international readership (Liu and Chang 2021). The function of constructing national identities by editorials was manifested more explicitly from a comparison of Chinese and Japanese newspapers editorials (Watanabe 2022). Furthermore, editorials also constructed the membership of value-based community through attitudinal (dis)affiliation (White 2021).

Some articles examined the evaluative patterns of digital discourse in social networks. For instance, Arancibia and Montecino (2017) offered insights into the attitudinal meanings in the comments responding to a YouTube video posted by a Chilean businessman who defended himself against accusations. Citizens voiced their angry attitudes, particularly judgment, and condemned social inequality and environmental destruction caused by elites like the businessman. Harju (2016) delineated the construction of imagined community through dialogic affiliation in YouTube memorial tributes to celebrity. Ross and Caldwell (2020) explored Donald Trump's tweets posted before and after his presidential election, centering on his evaluative strategies of attacking his electoral opponent. To sum up, the media texts studied in these articles were usually interpersonally-prominent. The writers of these texts manipulated various evaluative devices to persuade readers into their viewpoints and discursively enact power, position, and solidarity for ideological purposes.

### 3.3.2 Academic discourse

Academic discourse is often deemed to be objective and factual. However, it is often the case that evaluation pervades academic discourse. The evaluation in academic discourse align readers with particular community of shared values. Such evaluation are often implicit: the stance of writers are assumed or "naturalized". The evaluative orientation of academic discourse was manifested in the sections of introduction (Stosic 2021), discussion (Moyano 2019), and the whole text (Jiang and Zhang 2020). Moyano (2019) studied the engagement semantics within discussion sections of

Microbiology and Sociology papers written in Spanish. The Microbiology papers foregrounded the authors' contributions and acknowledged others' claims. The Sociology papers tended to contract the dialogic space to legitimize authors' propositions. Similarly, Stosic (2021) illustrated the ways how the authors of clinical psychology research articles mediated objectivity and promotion for topic significance. Three evaluative patterns were identified in the introductory sections of the articles. The authors employed these patterns to strategically persuade readers to accept the importance of their research. Jiang and Zhang (2020) illustrated the working mechanism of implicit evaluation in academic discourse as for value expression, writer-reader relation enactment, and textual organization. To recapitulate, academic writers used discursive strategies to justify the worthiness of their work, negotiate readers into alignment with them, and strike a balance between objectivity and subjectivity.

### **3.3.3 Review and criticism**

Review and criticism are the typical data for interpersonal analysis since they primarily aim to express opinions, assessment, and stance. Some contributions studied the evaluative meanings and patterns of wine review (Breit 2014; Hommerberg and Don 2015), hotel review (Smirnova 2022), peer review (Sellami-Baklouti 2016), and film review (Fuoli et al. 2022). For example, Breit (2014) offered an evaluative analysis of wine tasting comments in English and Spanish. This research verified that Appraisal framework was a suitable tool to analyze review texts. Further, a finely-tuned ATTITUDE system which was specifically modified for wine review was proved to be able to improve the delicacy of analysis (Hommerberg and Don 2015). In addition, Fuoli et al. (2022) inspected evaluative and non-evaluative metaphors in online film reviews to unpack the relationship between evaluation and metaphor. Sellami-Baklouti (2016) examined the interpersonal meanings in peer review reports in two disciplines: linguistics and mathematics. Different disciplinary contexts activated the divergence in terms of MOOD and MODALITY choices, and attitudinal meanings. The papers reviewed in this group showed that abundance of evaluation was characteristic of review and criticism. The interpersonal framework needed to be refined to analyze this type of discourse since evaluation was context-specific.

### **3.3.4 Judicial discourse**

SFL interpersonal metafunction and Appraisal framework have been a source of insight for the exploration of language in courtroom settings. Wang and Zhang (2014)

studied how a judge used evaluative language to reconcile conflicting claims of two parties in a Chinese court. Both the litigants employed various attitudinal and engagement resources to maximize their interests and minimize their losses. The three main disputes between the two parties were finally mediated by the judge through her interpersonal tactics and institutional power. Bartley (2020) demystified the evaluative patterns in the closing arguments of a trial. The prosecution expressed more negative attitudes, made more reference to the defendant, and occasionally construed explicit evaluation. The defense attorney employed more positive attitudes and emphasized the impossibility that the accused was the culprit. Both sides attempted to gain the jurors' trust via evaluative strategies.

### 3.3.5 Narrative discourse

The term “narrative” in this heading was used in broad sense to refer to various forms of story-telling, including literary works, religious scripture, letter and personal narrative. For example, Wang (2022) analyzed the Chinese word 喜欢 ‘like’, the most frequently-occurred emotional word in modern Chinese novels, to support the proposed Resonance Hypothesis and account for the interaction between emotional language and context. Miller (2016) shed light on the evaluative meanings of the word “noble” in Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*. Zhang (2018a) delineated the pathway of how students of a Britain-based university in China developed disciplinary identities through evaluative analyses of their narration of personal learning experiences. Relatedly, Yang (2017) delved into the construction of fathers’ identities in their letters written to their kids in a Chinese reality show. Some linguistic analyses of Bible drew on SFL to examine the dynamics of exchange between Joseph and the Egyptians in Genesis 47, 13–26 (Fuller 2018) and the interactive dialogues between Nehemiah and Artaxerxes in Nehemiah 2, 2–8 (Dyck 2020). Both papers revealed how the characters in Bible negotiated social roles, authority, and dominance. In a word, the papers in this group illuminated that the identities and interpersonal relations were established between participants in a dynamic process of telling stories.

### 3.3.6 Conversation and speech

Some papers addressed the dialogic patterning in online meeting (Lockwood and Forey 2016), casual conversations (Knight 2013), televised interviews (Zhao 2020), public speeches (Almutairi 2022; Li et al. 2020; Miller and Johnson 2013; Thuube and Ekanjume-Ilongo 2017), and medical health dialogue (Groenewold and Armstrong 2018; Hersh et al. 2018).

A few articles addressed the construction of affiliative relation and social status in public interlocution and address. Lockwood and Forey (2016) inspected

the linguistic interaction in a virtual team meeting of a multinational financial company in Australia. The manager chairing the meeting mainly used contractive resources to close dialogic space and control the communication, which indicated how his power and dominance was constructed discursively. Affiliation strategies were important for the effectiveness and rapport relations in either naturally occurring dialogue (Knight 2013) or purposeful interviews (Zhao 2020). Interlocutors could employ shared value and convivial humor to construct a sense of belonging to the same community to which they were affiliated. Miller and Johnson (2013) considered the evaluative pattern we must in US Congressional speeches by means of a corpus-assisted methodology. Li et al. (2020) probed into the interpersonal resources in the political discourse of Hong Kong which realized the image, relative power, and institutional role of actors involving these discourses.

Two papers (Groenewold and Armstrong 2018; Hersh et al. 2018) dealt with the speech functions and interactive moves in aphasic conversations. Groenewold and Armstrong (2018) showed that the employment of non-verbal and paralinguistic resources made an aphasic patient's conversations more assertive and thus contributed to his communicative ability. Hersh et al. (2018) shed light on the dynamic balance of therapist- and patient-focused clinical interactions in early informal aphasia assessment. Informal conversations were employed to enact rapport and partnership between clinician and patients. In summary, participants in conversation and speech dynamically negotiated shared attitudes and values to enact community affiliation, social bonding, solidarity, and inclusiveness.

### 3.3.7 Music and song

Focusing on musical discourse, some papers addressed the construction of interpersonal meanings in relation to phonological features. For example, Caldwell (2014) analyzed the distinct interpersonal semantics in the rap and soulful singing voices. In the voices, the systems of ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT and GRADUATION were analogized respectively to the sound systems of pitch range, time, and resonance. The rap voice construed denial, rejection, and maximized social distance. The soulful singing voice engaged listeners in close and intersubjective positions by opened heterogloss. Wang and Zhang (2019) anatomized the lyrics of Chinese contemporary Christian songs and traditional hymns to unpack the change of God-human relation. The comparisons of modality, judgment, mood, and projected roles in the two groups of hymns revealed dominant divergence between them as to interpersonal semantics. Contemporary hymns constructed much more intimacy between God and humans, which was attributed to cultural realities and the state of the church.

### 3.3.8 Multimodal discourse

A few contributions accounted for the co-construction of interpersonal meanings by different semiotic resources in textbook (Chen 2021), lecture (Karagevrekis 2016), gardening manual (Nord 2015), advertisement (Starc 2014), film (Maiorani 2015), picture book (Painter et al. 2013), mental health discourse (Sindoni 2020), and digital technology (Petroni 2016). For example, Karagevrekis (2016) characterized the diverse semiotic resources in an online lecture for meaning making. The lecturer's attitudes and viewpoints were conveyed through the integration of verbal, visual, and gestural devices. In this process the audience was also strategically positioned in a community of shared value with the lecturer. Nord (2015) addressed the readers' emotions motivated by a Swedish gardening manual. The written texts interacted with the visual elements and the textual layout to construe diverse attitudes. Starc (2014) offered an insight into the interpersonal meaning-making in a multimodal advertisement in relation to some relevant texts which were published in the Slovene newspapers. Chen (2021) inspected the interpersonal meaning-making realized by visual and linguistic resources in multimodal textbooks. Sindoni (2020) examined the construal of identity and distance in multimodal mental health discourse offering peer support to people with suicidal thoughts. Different from the above-reviewed works, Petroni (2016) focused on the digital technologies that were persuasive and expressed evaluative meanings. These technologies mainly aroused positive attitudes and engaged the users in alignment. An APPRAISAL-based prototypical classification was formalized to categorize nine relevant technologies, such as the "like" button, the "poke" button, rating systems, notifications and uploading/downloading/sharing.

In a nutshell, verbal and nonverbal elements cooperated to construe attitudinal meanings and negotiate the relationships of interactants engaged in multimodal discourses. The choices of diverse semiotic resources activated attitudes and positioned readers, which was affected by the sociocultural context of multimodal discourses.

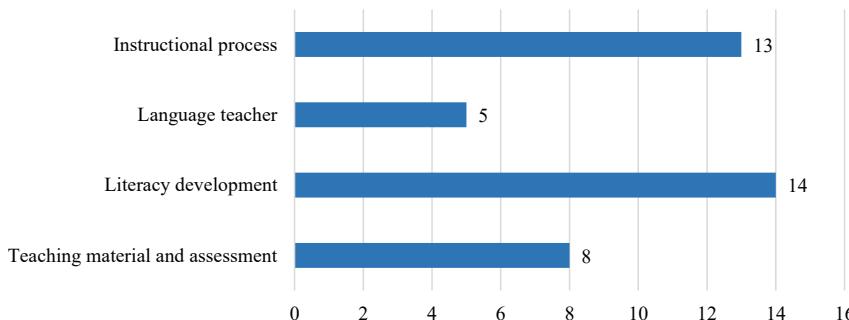
### 3.3.9 Other discourse

Some articles and chapters examined particular discourses that could not be classified into the types of discourse reviewed above, including dictionary (Chen 2017), public health posters (Wang and Huang 2021), woman victimhood discourse (Hidalgo-Tenorio and Benítez-Castro 2021), and historical texts (Myskow 2018b). For instance, Chen (2017) investigated the hybrid identities of lexicographer of an English learner's dictionary. The interplay mood and modality resources revealed that the lexicographer balanced the role between descriptivist and prescriptivist. Wang and

Huang (2021) compared the public health posters during the COVID-19 pandemic in Guangzhou and Hong Kong in terms of interpersonal lexicogrammatical resources. Guangzhou foregrounded contact prevention while Hong Kong favored social distancing, which reflected the interweaving of neologism and public health event. Hidalgo-Tenorio and Benítez-Castro (2021) inspected the patterns of attitudinal language in the discourse of Irish woman victimhood. They unveiled the trauma, hatred, and remorse of abused women. To sum, the above research extended the coverage of types of discourses to miscellaneous discourse and exemplified how interpersonal meanings and relationships were negotiated in specific contexts.

### 3.4 Language education

Some studies explicated the applicability of interpersonal model of SFL in the field of language teaching and learning. The research primarily based their findings on interpersonal systems, like APPRAISAL, NEGOTIATION, EXCHANGE STRUCTURE, MOOD, MODALITY, etc. Interpersonally-oriented language education supported language teaching and learning in four facets: literacy development, instructional processes, teaching materials and assessment, and language teacher. The studies on instructional processes deals with settings, procedures and tasks of classroom interactions, which were fundamental to pedagogy. This group of studies explored the ways that facilitated person-to-person interactions through linguistic resources and dialogic strategies. The studies on literacy development focused on the products that different instructional processes and feedback resulted in language learning, particularly students' reading skills and writing outcomes. The studies on teaching material and assessment investigated the pattern and ideology that underlay the choice of evaluation in textbooks. This group of studies also included researchers' efforts to



**Figure 5:** Number of studies of language education (total number = 40).

uncover the interpersonal meanings in assessment practices. The studies on language teacher addressed teachers' cognition (knowledge and identity) and teacher development programs so as to improve their instructional practices. Figure 5 presents the number of studies of each subtheme.

### 3.4.1 Literacy development

A group of studies addressed disciplinary and multilingual literacy development (Lancaster 2014; Liardét 2018; Magaña 2021; Moore and Schleppegrell 2014; Myskow and Gordon 2012; Whittaker and McCabe 2020), quality of written production (Cheung and Low 2019; Ignatieva 2017; Miller et al. 2014; Xuan and Huang 2017), critical language awareness (O'Hallaron et al. 2015; Szenes and Tilakaratna 2021; Zhang 2018b), feedback (Cunningham and Link 2021), and challenges (Symons 2017).

SFL-inspired interpersonal pedagogy was used in different content subjects to facilitate both multilingual literacy development and content knowledge construction. For example, Whittaker and McCabe (2020) analyzed the evaluative language of papers written by English as second language (ESL) learners from three disciplines in Spanish schools. The research suggested that content teaching incorporate the instruction of coupling evaluation with subject-specific vocabulary. Relatedly, Lancaster (2014) probed into the patterns of stance in undergraduate students' argumentative writing in an economics course. Focusing on the choices of MODALITY in Spanish as heritage language learners' written texts, Magaña (2021) identified the preferred types of modality across genres and the typical modality-loaded genres, which indicated the learners' linguistic competence of discursive alignment and affiliation. Moreover, in English literature course the deployment of Appraisal framework supported students in literary interpretation, character evaluation, and content learning (Moore and Schleppegrell 2014).

The research into the impact of interpersonally-oriented language instruction illuminated the contribution of SFL to the quality of written production. Based on the data taken from a longitudinal literacy research in the Middle East, Miller et al. (2014) examined the heteroglossic engagement resources deployed in essays written by college students in history course. Higher rated essays differed from lower rated ones in terms of the management of alternative voices and the pattern of move. Similarly, Cheung and Low (2019) explored how junior college students in Singapore enacted authorial voices in argumentative essays. Higher-graded essays used more attitudinal and engagement resources to express writers' opinions and negotiate with different positions.

In addition, interpersonally-oriented literacy curriculum improved both teachers' and students' critical language awareness. For example, O'Hallaron et al.

(2015) exemplified the initial stages in which elementary teachers and students were supported to develop critical language awareness towards science texts. Teachers and students improved their ability of identifying attitudinal and engagement resources. Finally, they developed the sense of critically interpreting authors' attitudes and perspectives. Zhang (2018b) implemented a reflection-oriented literacy curriculum to a few Chinese university students in writing instruction. Their capability of decoding and coding interpersonal meanings was developed, which in turn intensified their reflective identities and rendered them critical readers and writers.

While findings in regard to literacy development were encouraging, some unproductive cases drew our attention to potential challenges. Symons (2017) problematized the SFL-inspired approach by some pitfalls that teachers might encountered when they used interpersonal metalanguage. A teacher conflated modality of high certainty with the strength of evidence. Such confusion did not effectively support students in identifying and evaluating evidence. It was challenging for the teacher to manipulate the SFL metalanguage in language and content teaching. Despite the challenges, the reviewed studies still threw light on the affordance of SFL on the development of multi-competency, viz. literacy and critical language awareness.

### **3.4.2 Instructional process**

Some studies addressed SFL-informed classroom interactions in terms of online discussions (Delahunty et al. 2014; Lander 2014, 2015; Oliveira et al. 2013), dialogic strategies (Governor et al. 2021; Troyan 2021), exchange structure (DeJarnette 2022; González and DeJarnette 2015; Kartika-Ningsih 2020; Elabdali 2022; Martin and Dreyfus 2015), and teacher questions (Yang 2021c; Yang and Yin 2022).

Some papers examined the interpersonal resources and interactive patterns of online discussions. Located in the context of postgraduate health professional course at an Australian university, Lander (2014, 2015) addressed the effectiveness of asynchronous online discussions, focusing on the interpersonal resources employed by moderators to construct social presence and feelings of community affiliation. Online discussion featured both conversation and pedagogical interaction, a hybrid nature which might lead to the frustration of students due to absent responses or ambiguous answers. Different from the above studies was Oliveira et al. (2013) which presented evaluative analyses of the online synchronous interaction between two students within a virtual learning context. Pedagogic models mediated by internet and new technologies should value the negotiation of evaluative meanings to facilitate the learning effect.

Some works focused on the exchange structures and semantic moves of classroom interactions. Focusing on group work in mathematical classes, DeJarnette (2022) and González and DeJarnette (2015) unpacked the interactional moves selected by teachers to support students in solving problems and the patterns that students discursively positioned one another. Kartika-Ningsih (2020) explored the shift of language through the lens of the NEGOTIATION system in a bilingual classroom of Indonesian and English. Based on genre pedagogy, Martin and Dreyfus (2015) illustrated how to organize classroom interactions into structured exchanges from three perspectives (macro-, meso-, and micro-structures) at tertiary linguistics lessons.

A few studies examined voices negotiation and stance-taking in classroom interactions to make instructional practices more dialogic. For example, Governor et al. (2021) shed light on the linguistic pattern of negotiation when students took part in Earth science argumentation for preservice teacher. Analyses of mood, modality and move revealed that the students articulated tentatively their stances, softened their claims and thus created consensus collaboratively. Further, through the lens of AT, Troyan (2021) revealed how a French world language teacher motivated students to engage in classroom activities by heteroglossic strategies and consequently enacted effective teacher-student interactions.

Also rooted in classroom interaction were Yang (2021c) and Yang and Yin (2022) which focused on teacher questions as a tool to foster heteroglossic communications in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. Yang (2021c) recognized six interpersonal patterns with different degrees of interactivity that were related to the length of student answers. Similarly, Yang and Yin (2022) demonstrated that the use of interpersonal projection by Chinese EFL teachers in their questions prompted lengthier and more complex answers by students. Both papers explicated the relevance of teacher questions and students' willingness to communicate. In summary, SFL was leveraged to teach students the skills of legitimizing their ideas and aligning with others. Students were encouraged to participate in classroom activities so that the interaction between teachers and learners were more effective.

### 3.4.3 Teaching material and assessment

Some studies (Lee 2015; Lindgren and Stevenson 2013; Mendes and Martins 2022; Thomas et al. 2015) demonstrated the potential of SFL to analyze interpersonal resources in language assessment with the purpose of improving language teaching. Mendes and Martins (2022) analyzed the modal and temporal deictic values in Portuguese fictional narratives written by 4th graders under a national assessment. The narratives did not comply with the types of texts expected by the exam. The findings indicated the need of improving teachers' awareness that literacy practices in school circumstance were relevant to potential production of specific register.

Likewise, Lee (2015) proposed that appropriate use of valuation resources added critical tone to academic writing. This proposal was supported by the comparison of higher-graded and lower-graded persuasive essays written by undergraduates in Australia. The findings from these studies illustrated the pedagogical implications of SFL for language assessment and literacy development.

Several studies analyzed the evaluative resources in textbooks used in Argentina (Boccia 2021), Canada (Myskow 2018a, 2019), U.S. and Japan (Gu 2016), among which history textbooks were of much interest to researchers. For instance, Myskow (2019) investigated the interpersonal meanings in verbal and visual texts in a Canadian textbook of social studies. The critical inquiry sections in that book actually positioned readers to adopt the “right values” construed by the core narrative. The findings revealed the incompatibility between critical thinking and national identities in the textbook. Moving to the EFL context, Boccia (2021) elucidated that dialogic strategies of negotiation and alignment were not taught functionally by the primary school textbooks in Argentina. In a word, textbooks should not only transmit content knowledge and official values but follow the principle of dialogism that informed students to appropriate interpersonal metafunction in social contexts.

### **3.4.4 Language teacher**

The studies that approached the issue of language teacher were fewer than those within the previous three sub-themes but still enlightening. McKinley (2018) formulated a framework for analyzing writer identity which combined three main systems of APPRAISAL with possibilities of selfhood. This framework provided teachers with a tool with which they could support students in constructing appropriate writer identities and provide effective feedback. Harman and Zhang (2015) explored second language teachers’ identities enacted by specific evaluative resources and speech functions in their participation in language education course. Liljekvist et al. (2021) examined the speech functions and interactional patterns in Swedish teachers’ engagement in professional development communities in Facebook. Relatedly, Oliveira and Esteve-González (2020) dissected the speech functions and discursive features of student teachers’ conversations in an online group learning. O’Hallaron et al. (2015) introduced the notion of authorial attitudes and voices in informational texts to elementary teachers of science course. They claimed that the teachers needed a pedagogical approach based on interpersonal metalanguage. This approach could heighten their critical language awareness when they read and taught science texts. In summary, the studies were intended to understand language teachers’ cognition and support teacher development.

## 4 Discussion and future directions

### 4.1 Discussion

Based on the purposefully designed strategy for data collection and selection, this review has surveyed 160 SFL-informed studies concerning interpersonal meta-function. The coding and thematization revealed four macro-level categories, serving as the headings under which the streams of scholarship have been reviewed. Systemicists have examined the functionality of interpersonal linguistic resources in the streams of theoretical explorations, multilingual studies, discourse analysis, and language education. The SFL interpersonal model has been applied and revisited in a large area of language use.

The studies of theoretical explorations deal with issues that are more general and theoretical. Firstly, the theoretical model lends itself to refinement in terms of system (e.g. ATTITUDE, MEDIATION), structure (e.g. mood) and rank (e.g. maneuver). Such studies usually revisit the theoretical model from the perspective of basic categories in SFL. The interaction of language and context needs to be modeled from a social semiotic perspective. Secondly, considerable text-based research rest on Appraisal framework, supporting the view that it is “the most systematic and influential” framework (Su and Hunston 2019: 343) in analyses of evaluation. Though powerful, this approach is still fledgling since it is treated as “hypotheses about the relevant meanings” (White 2002: 4) for the taxonomy of values of ATTITUDE. The framework is subject to several challenges, such as the differentiation of judgment from appreciation, the “Russian Dolls” syndrome, the systematization of the analysis of implicit attitude (Lluch 2022; Thompson 2008, 2014). These issues are due to the fact that evaluation is context-dependent and field-sensitive. Such fluidity is further evidenced by the papers on interpersonal systems in semantics and context strata (e.g. Almutairi 2021; Hommerberg and Don 2015; Smirnova 2022). Thirdly, inter- and intra-disciplinary dialogues drive SFL to produce more theoretical developments and explanatory power. The importing of approaches or theories from complementary linguistic branches and discipline have made substantial gains from that dialogues. In addition, some protocols and tools have been developed for describing interpersonal meanings. Such methodological developments would contribute to large-scale coding and analysis of interpersonal meanings so as to approach the probabilistic nature of language quantitatively.

The literature on multilingual studies reveals that “SFL is well positioned, typologically speaking, to explore interpersonal descriptive motifs and generalizations” (Martin 2018: 7). The papers in this stream are characteristic of the engagement with texts in contexts. Firstly, the description and comparison of interpersonal

resources usually take clause as the point of departure. The phonological, morphological, lexical, and clausal units that realize interpersonal metafunction vary in different languages. Some categories and systems in the basic system network of MOOD (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014) are adapted to fit in specific languages. Secondly, descriptive generalizations should be based on the account of how whole systems operate in contexts (Caffarel et al. 2004). This holistic perspective of systems are characteristic of trinocular vision, axial reasoning and the orientation “from above”. Thirdly, the research into translation and interpreting mostly focuses on the enactment of evaluation and speech roles in the target texts. The target readers and cultures determine the pattern of recreating interpersonal meanings.

The literature on multilingual studies consolidates the descriptive generalization and language universals. Language description and comparison support the generalization of interpersonal systems, which could be used for the prediction of text instances and as the guide in translation and interpreting praxis. Though the translation and interpreting studies concentrate on texts as instances, the development of translation universal, a gap of the reviewed literature, are also necessary. From the dimension of axis, the description and comparison of individual languages contribute to the recognition of sameness and distinction in respect of interpersonal systems and structures. For example, though the fundamental MOOD system functions in numerous languages around the world, some variants are identified in the system. Such variations would serve as typological parameters for the study of language universals and the peculiarities of specific languages.

The scholarship of discourse analysis demonstrates the potential and applicability of SFL in analyzing the interpersonal metafunction in a range of discourses. Firstly, the studies of media discourse characterize the writer-reader interaction as the writers attempt to persuade readers into their viewpoints. Secondly, reviews, criticisms, narrative discourses, conversation, and speeches are often heavily loaded with evaluation (e.g. Almutairi 2022; Hommerberg and Don 2015; Lockwood and Forey 2016; Smirnova 2022; Yang 2017). Producers of these texts dialogically attribute and grade their assessment so as to assert identities and create affiliation. Thirdly, academic and judicial discourses are traditionally taken for granted as being objective and factual. The reviewed articles reveal that both subjectivity and neutrality feature these texts (e.g. Moyano 2019; Wang and Zhang 2014). In addition, the SFL interpersonal framework offers a deep insight into the pattern different semiotic resources (e.g. linguistic, visual) combine to realize interpersonal meanings. Multimodal resources can be manipulated to manage interactions, engage participants and construe attitudinal meanings.

The findings of this review demonstrate that the pedagogy empowered by SFL interpersonal model has supported the development of academic literacy, subject-

area knowledge, and reflective competence for monolingual and multilingual students across different educational contexts (e.g. Lancaster 2014; Moore and Schleppegrell 2014; O'Hallaron et al. 2015; Whittaker and McCabe 2020; Zhang 2018a). It is important to help students develop critical thinking when they evaluate attitudes and positions in texts. The affordance of this pedagogy is also proved by numerous analyses of spoken or written discourses taken from classroom interactions, assessments, and writing tasks. Effective instruction is characterized by teachers' heteroglossic and affiliative strategies that motivate and align with students (e.g. Governor et al. 2021; Lander 2014, 2015; Troyan 2021). Dialogic pedagogy of this kind supports high performance and successful enactment of social relation in classroom. The teachers are also informed of the skills that enable them to mediate alternative voices, encourage students' engagement, and enact consensus positions. This pedagogy guides students to construct the valued interpersonal meanings in specific registers so that they could produce higher-rated composition (Cheung and Low 2019; Miller et al. 2014). SFL interpersonal framework, especially APPRAISAL, is of great usefulness in analyzing students' outcomes in language assessment, which in turn illuminates assessment design and literacy instruction (e.g. Lee 2015; Mendes and Martins 2022; Thomas et al. 2015). In this sense, this interpersonally-focused pedagogy improves teachers' instructional praxis from a distinctive theoretical perspective (McKinley 2018; O'Hallaron et al. 2015). However, there are also occasions that this framework is misused (Symons 2017). It even experiences strong resistance from teachers due to the perceptions that "SFL theory was too complex" (Troyan et al. 2021: 9). It is still a challenging task to manipulate this approach flexibly in language education.

Fundamental concepts of SFL drive empirical studies (multilingual studies, discourse analysis and language education). Firstly, the foci of the research extend across the strata inside and outside language: phonology, lexicogrammar, semantics, and context. The trinocular vision is often adopted to examine interpersonal metafunction from above (the construal of meaning in semantics stratum), from around (the interaction with grammatical systems and lexis in lexicogrammar stratum), and from below (the realization of meanings in phonology stratum). Secondly, each stratum is organized internally by rank and axis. The structural units at different ranks, like *if*-conditional, interjection and Spanish suffixes, are characterized along the rank scale. In this manner the vertical relations of stratum and rank are made visible in terms of interpersonal metafunction. The papers profile the interpersonal systems and structures by means of axial reasoning: paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes. Thirdly, interpersonal meaning is organized by textual devices to represent ideational subject. These three strands of meaning (metafunction) operate simultaneously across strata. Thus, the reviewed literature, though interpersonally-oriented, inevitably deals with the horizontal relation of three metafunctions.

Fourthly, the description of options in the interpersonal systems varies from the most delicacy (Benitez-Castro and Hidalgo-Tenorio 2022) to the least (Almutairi 2021). Finally, the studies above elucidate the differentiated realizations of APPRAISAL system and varied text instances in distinct contexts. The movement from system as potential to text as instance herein models the concept of instantiation. In a word, the research in this stream approaches the theoretical issues by drawing on the basic SFL concepts (stratum, rank, axis, metafunction, delicacy, instantiation).

## 4.2 Future directions

Recommendations for future research into interpersonal metafunction are given on the basis of the findings of this review. Systemicists could promote the work on theoretical explorations in three aspects. Firstly, interpersonal metafunction varies as contexts change. The original interpersonal systems, (e.g. APPRAISAL), structures (e.g. mood structure), and rank (move, exchange) are not meant to be used to analyze mechanically without adaptation. We need to fine-tune the existing interpersonal model to adapt to diverse languages and contexts. Secondly, the literature reviewed mainly focuses on the development of interpersonal meaning in texts and individuals. Ontogenesis and logogenesis receive the most attention from scholars, leaving the study of phylogenesis, the change of interpersonal systems, underdeveloped. The works on phylogenesis such as McGregor (2019) and Taverniers (2018) are encouraging and more contributions alike are expected. Last but not least, in text-based studies, interpersonal resources are mostly coded manually by the researchers. During the past decade very little software is developed for automated analysis. To respond to Martin's (2009) expectation of such technology, automated analytic tools are in need to annotate large quantities of texts for interpersonal metafunction. The complement of such tools would take the corpus-based quantitative research one step further.

There remain some gaps too as to multilingual studies. Firstly, the recent literature on language description and comparison is based on small samples of one or two languages. The generalizability of the proposed interpersonal systems and structures has not been tested yet against more languages. Some typological studies like Teruya et al. (2007) are based on large samples of languages. More such work is well expected to identify cross-linguistic variations and recurrent patterns that motivate theoretical and descriptive generalizations. Secondly, the languages that have been described and compared in terms of interpersonal metafunction constitute a small portion of the thousands of languages worldwide. The SFL-informed typological activities need to expand across languages and language families.

Thirdly, as far as translation and interpretation studies are concerned, the existing publications are unevenly distributed towards written texts. The construal and shift of interpersonal meanings in interpreting deserve further investigation.

This review identifies two areas for potential development in discourse analysis. Firstly, the development of digital technology has produced new modes of meaning on the internet. It is necessary to interpret the new interpersonal meanings afforded through digital channels. Secondly, the research into discourse analysis concentrates on interpersonal semantics and lexicogrammar. However, phonological resources (e.g. tone, group, and rhythm) also enact social relations. The research into these resources will be well deserved.

Two underdeveloped or promising areas are recommended for future research into language education. Firstly, the language education research is mainly contextualized in the settings where English is the target of language education or the medium of content learning. Just a few papers address the education of other languages, such as Spanish, Portuguese, Swedish, etc. It is suggested that future research draw upon the interpersonal framework in a variety of linguistic contexts. Secondly, the literature in this stream is mostly situated in the schools of tertiary level. Teachers and students at different schooling levels vary with regard to their knowledge and cognition. Future studies could address the pliability of interpersonally-oriented language education in primary and secondary schools.

## 5 Conclusions

In response to the research questions raised in the opening section, this research synthesis has reviewed the recent literature on interpersonal metafunction within the tradition of SFL. Four lines of scholarship emerge from this review, representing the convergence of different concepts in this linguistic school with respect to interpersonal exchange. The purpose of this review is to categorize the findings and implications of relevant contributions, which in turn feed back into the development of SFL interpersonal model in particular. Adopting a focused lens, this review attends to the use of interpersonal meaning-potentials in various social contexts.

The four streams of literature are not insulated from one another, but coherent and interrelated with reference to context, on which interpersonal metafunction is heavily dependent. The variations of interpersonal systems as potential and texts as instance are the realization of contexts of either situation or culture. The literature follows SFL's basic tenet that language is conceptualized as social semiotic, the use of which is a process of choosing meaning from linguistic system in contexts. Therefore, when systemicists engage with language education, discourse analysis, multilingual studies, and theoretical exploration, the context needs to be taken into primary

consideration. The underlying motivation is that SFL prioritized the principle of grounding research in natural and authentic texts.

The literature shed light on the functional interpretation of context in modeling interpersonal metafunction. Speakers or writers choose meaning-potentials to produce texts in the most immediate environment of situational context, a semiotic notion containing the variables of Field (exchange subject), Tenor (interpersonal relationship), and Mode (textual wordings) (Halliday 1978). The literature provide a theoretical understanding of how interpersonal metafunction is realized discursively in particular context. Though Tenor was the situation of the literature, it is scrutinized in conjunction with Field and Mode. Thereby the interpretation of contextual factors in texts is more comprehensive and thorough.

The limitation of this review is that all the papers were collected and selected by myself, and that surely there was subjectivity to a certain extent in my decisions. Despite the limitation, this review still provides a necessary understanding of the status quo of the recent representative scholarship.

## Appendix: Codebook

### 01 Theoretical explorations

- 0101 Theoretical model revisit
- 0102 Research methodologies
- 0103 Intra- and inter-disciplinary dialogues

### 02 Multilingual studies

- 0201 Language description and comparison
- 0202 Translation and interpreting

### 03 Discourse analysis

- 0301 Media discourse
- 0302 Academic discourse
- 0303 Review and criticism
- 0304 Judicial discourse
- 0305 Narrative discourse
- 0306 Conversation and speech
- 0307 Music and song
- 0308 Multimodal discourse
- 0309 Other discourse

#### 04 Language education

- 0401 Literacy development
- 0402 Instructional process
- 0403 Teaching material and assessment
- 0404 Language teacher

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