Book Review

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Systemic functional linguistics (SFL), as a general and appliable linguistic theory, encompasses a broad spectrum of applications, with one pivotal field being language description. The utilization of SFL theory in language description, termed Systemic Functional Language Description (SFLD), goes back to Halliday's fieldwork on Chinese dialects in the 1940s (Caffarel et al. 2004: xi). With the publication of *Language typology: A functional perspective* (Caffarel et al. 2004), the 21st century witnessed an escalating academic interest in SFLD. This surge included both theoretical works such as Matthiessen and Halliday (2009) and Martin (2013), as well as language-specific descriptions as surveyed by Mwinlaaru and Xuan (2016). Recent years have witnessed a proliferation of research outcomes in SFLD, including Mwinlaaru (2017), Mwinlaaru et al. (2018), Martin (2018), Martin et al. (2020), Martin et al. (2021), Kadooka (2021), Doran et al. (2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b), and Kim et al. (2023), among others. *Systemic functional grammar: A text-based description of English, Spanish, and Chinese*, against this background, aims to elucidate the theory and reasoning underpinning SFLD in a pedagogical manner, so as to foster more scholarly endeavors in this domain.

This book, apart from an introduction and a summary chapter, comprises five chapters, individually dedicated to exploring the nominal group, verbal group, mood, transitivity, and theme in English, Spanish, and Chinese. Each chapter initially reviews context variables and discourse semantic systems relevant to the considered grammar systems before delving into the core grammar systems and structures.

Chapter 1 introduces the background and objectives of the book, laying the theoretical and methodological groundwork. This book aims to guide readers through both the theoretical framework and the practical reasoning which are essential to establish comprehensive descriptions. In terms of theory, this chapter introduces the semiotic dimensions of axis, stratification, metafunction, and rank in SFL. The axis dimension privileges paradigmatic relations over syntagmatic ones in SFLD. The stratification dimension distinguishes between the context stratum and the language stratum. The former, characterized by degrees of symbolic abstraction, includes genre and register as distinct levels, and the latter comprises discourse

semantics, lexicogrammar, and phonology as hierarchical strata. SFLD takes discourse semantic systems and register variables most relevant to the described grammar systems into consideration. Methodologically, this chapter expounds upon the distinct traits of SFLD concerning data, applicability, and argumentation. Noteworthy within the argumentation aspect are the emphases on the 'trinocular' reasoning (reasoning from above, from around, and from below) and axial reasoning (privileging paradigmatic relations over syntagmatic ones).

Chapter 2 explores nominal group system and structure. It first approaches nominal groups from above, examining their roles in terms of field and mode variables and the discourse semantic systems of IDEATION and IDENTIFICATION. It subsequently investigates the nominal group structure and system in English. Structurally, it examines the Thing, Classifier, Epithet, Numerative, Deictic, and Qualifier functions within English nominal groups. This examination extensively explores the roles, realizations, and sequential arrangement of these functions, utilizing the trinocular reasoning. Systemically, it describes the English nominal group systems, highlighting a systemic contrast between designating and specifying nominal groups. The latter is intricately expanded to include five simultaneous systems: classification, description, quantification, determination, and qualification. This chapter then transitions to exploring nominal group structures and systems in Spanish and Chinese, which bear fundamental similarities to English. Variations emerge in the realizations and sequence of specific functions. For instance, in Spanish, Classifiers realized by nouns are frequently linked to the Thing by the particle *de,* and Classifiers and most Epithets follow the Thing. Additionally, Spanish employs pronominal clitics and person-number morphology, apart from personal pronouns, to track entities. In Chinese nominal group structure, the Epithet is realized by a word complex involving an adjective followed by the clitic *de,* the Numerative is supplanted by the Measurer function, and the Qualifer precedes the Thing function.

Chapter 3 investigates verbal group system and structure. It first approaches verbal groups from above, exploring their roles in terms of field and tenor variables and the discourse semantic systems of IDEATION, CONNEXION, IDENTIFICATION, and APPRAISAL. This chapter then investigates verbal group resources in English. Given that English verbal groups are analyzed as univariate structures, this chapter allocates greater focus to verbal group systems. Ideationally, it centers on TENSE systems, including the PRIMARY TENSE system and the SECONDARY TENSE system. Interpersonally, it outlines the roles of English verbal groups in terms of distinguishing moves in exchange structure. Additionally, by elucidating English MODALITY and POLARITY systems, it explores their roles in nuancing the play of voices around a move. This chapter proceeds to explore verbal group resources in Spanish and Chinese in a similar manner, yet variations surface. In Spanish, ideationally, within the PRIMARY TENSE

system, the selection of 'past' leads to a subsequent choice between 'perfect' and 'imperfect'. Besides, Spanish verbal groups may include pronominal clitics and person-number affixion, enabling the realization of Participants. Interpersonally, Spanish MODALITY co-selects alongside PRIMARY TENSE, and POLARITY is further expanded in terms of delicacy. Moreover, the limits of univariate analysis of Spanish verbal group structure are identified and an alternative analysis is provided. In the context of Chinese, ideationally, verbal groups do not position a figure in relation to the time of speaking or writing. Instead, they construe figures as completed or ongoing concerning a certain temporal reference point, or as habitual or repetitive occurrences or states. This functionality is attributed to the grammar system known as ASPECT. Consequently, this chapter delves into the ASPECT and PHASE systems in Chinese in detail.

Chapter 4 focuses on MOOD systems and structures. It begins by approaching clauses from above, exploring the interpersonal roles of clauses in terms of tenor and the discourse semantic systems of NEGOTIATION and APPRAISAL. Additionally, it sketches NEGOTIATION system. This chapter then proceeds to delve into English MOOD resources. Drawing on examples of exchanges from English texts, it starts from basic mood types such as declarative and interrogative, then advances to more intricate ones of a higher degree of delicacy, gradually establishing English MOOD systems. In this process, trinocular reasoning is extensively employed to differentiate certain types of mood. In addition, it examines English POLARITY and MODALITY resources, those realizing the ENGAGEMENT systems in APPRAISAL. In a similar manner, this chapter examines Spanish and Chinese MOOD resources, which differ from those of English in terms of system and structure. Systemically, Spanish has more delicate imperative MOOD systems, allowing intersections with interlocutors of all persons and all numbers, except for the first-person singular; and Chinese polar interrogative leads to a subsequent choice between 'addressee-oriented' and 'proposition-oriented' and the former leads to a further choice between 'querying' and 'confirming'. Structurally, unlike English, the Predicator is the core element in Spanish and Chinese mood structures; and polar interrogatives in Spanish are realized by intonation and in Chinese by Moderators and a disjunctive structure. Finally, an alternative description of MOOD in Chinese is presented.

Chapter 5 explores TRANSITIVITY systems and structures. It commences by examining clauses from above, sketching their ideational roles in terms of field and IDEATION. This Chapter then delves into the TRANSITIVITY resources in English. Initially, it distinguishes the three most common types of clauses in English texts: material, mental, and relational clauses. It then extends along the dimension of delicacy, expanding relational clause systems and material clause systems. Finally, it explores three other relatively uncommon types of clauses: existential, verbal, and behavioral clauses. Of particular note, this section extensively demonstrates how to deploy the

method of uncovering cryptotypes to classify clauses. This involves effectively detecting hidden distinctions between different types of clauses through a series of reactances, including general verbs that can be used in place of the Process, the consciousness of the Participants, the phenomena affected by the Process, the number of Participants involved in the Process, etc. The following two sections explore TRANSITIVITY resources in Spanish and Chinese, employing the reasoning based on cryptotypes frequently to distinguish between different clause types. Once more, the two languages exhibit differences in terms of transitivity resources when compared to English. Structurally, for example, Participants in Spanish clauses may be realized by verbal group inflections and pronominal clitics; Participants in Chinese clauses can be omitted when they can be retrieved from context; and Chinese allows attributive relationals of descriptive subtype to have no Process function. Systemically, Chinese does not distinguish the behavioral as a separate clause type; and Spanish mental clause systems are significantly extended due to their structure features.

Chapter 6 investigates THEME and INFORMATION systems and structures. It starts by examining clauses from above, introducing their textual roles in terms of mode and PERIODICITY. In continuation, this chapter delves into the information flow in English. It illustrates the sequential development of information with an English text as an example, clause by clause. It then introduces the concepts of Theme and New. In English declaratives, the Theme is realized by the Subject, serving to establish an anchor for the intended message of the text, fixing our gaze on the field. The New is realized by the final salient syllable in a tone group, extending our gaze on the field. Furthermore, this chapter proceeds to present the concepts of Marked Theme, Marked New, Hyper-Theme, and Hyper-New, establishing English THEME systems and INFORMATION systems. Unlike some SFL accounts of Theme, this chapter distinguishes (unmarked) Theme from Marked Theme as two distinct elements with differing functions and realizations. Following the same approach, this chapter explores Spanish and Chinese information flow. The THEME and INFORMATION systems in these two languages bear similarities to English, yet some differences emerge. For instance, in Chinese the Theme is realized by the Participant before the Process, and in Spanish, it is realized by the nominal group that is co-referential with the person and number morphology of the Predicator. And in both languages, once the Theme is established as an ideational anchor, it is often left implicit. In addition, in Spanish, the Theme can be realized after the Predicator, which has to do transitivity choices and on the other hand with certain types of evaluation.

Chapter 7 serves as a brief summary of this book. It first reiterates the book's goal to exemplify an effective approach to developing grammatical descriptions rooted in the basic principles of SFL. Moreover, it advocates for language descriptions that

highlight the unique features intrinsic to the language being described. This chapter then points out the methodological limitations of this book in terms of data, appliability, and axial argumentation and offers recommendations for the necessary procedures as readers embark on developing comprehensive SFLD of their own. Lastly, this chapter brings up key points to keep in mind when delving into functional language typology, particularly concerning the selection of comparative and descriptive objects.

In contrast to other publications within the SFLD domain, this book distinguishes itself not merely by elucidating SFL theories but by accentuating the practical manifestation of SFLD methodologies, thereby positioning itself as a pragmatic and instructive textbook. Principally, it elaborates to readers on how to actually use the practical reasoning at the core of SFLD to develop comprehensive and effective language descriptions. This entails employing the trinocular reasoning (the reasoning from above, from around, and from below), the axial reasoning (privileging paradigmatic relations over syntagmatic relations), and the cryptotype-driven reasoning (revealing hidden categories through reactance analysis) to explain why a certain grammar system or structure is described the way it is. This stands out as one of the brightest spots in this book and a huge contribution to SFLD, equipping readers with the tools to engage in their own language descriptions. Furthermore, this book fosters strong interactivity. Rather than directly showcasing specific grammar systems or structures, it builds up various grammar systems and structures in English, Spanish, and Chinese step-by-step, using examples from texts and employing the aforementioned practical reasoning. Throughout this process, it continually prompts readers through questioning, encouraging deep reflection on why a particular grammar system or structure is described as such, thereby elevating reader involvement beyond passive reception to active participation in the discourse. Moreover, this book maintains a high degree of openness. It presents descriptions of different grammar systems and structures in the three languages more as illustrative examples than prescriptive ones. It advocates critical introspection from readers, encouraging alternative descriptions while providing extensive references from related fields. Each chapter outlines potential challenges in the description process, encouraging readers to explore various descriptions based on different purposes. Hence, this book stands as an indispensable, practical, and valuable textbook in the SFLD field.

Compared to traditional descriptive grammars, this book eloquently showcases distinctive features of SFLD. Firstly, in terms of data, while traditional descriptive grammars often rely on data collected from field surveys, data based on native speakers' introspection, or elicited data, SFLD usually relies on textual data. It is text-based, taking language description as "a process of generalizing from the analysis of textual data" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 54). Meanwhile, the texts are supposed

to be rich enough in terms of genre types so as to display the full meaning potential of the language under description. Secondly, from a theoretical viewpoint, while traditional descriptive grammars usually maintain a degree of theoretical neutrality and focus predominantly on the structural aspects of grammar, SFLD, guided by SFL theory, is characterized by a systemic-semantic orientation, prioritizing paradigmatic relations and construing language as a multidimensional semiotic system. Thirdly, SFLD distinguishes between general linguistic theory and particular descriptions, advocating impartiality and accentuating the uniqueness of each language, as manifested in its depiction of grammar structures and systems in Spanish and Chinese.

Additionally, this book offers many novel interpretations of certain lexicogrammars based on discourse semantics, extending and complementing previous research, thus showcasing advancements in SFL theory. For instance, it provides textual interpretations of the Deictic and the Qualifier functions within nominal groups; it describes FOCUS systems in English and nominal group systems; it offers interpersonal interpretations of verbal groups; it describes the discourse semantic system of NEGOTIATION; it reinterprets the Theme and the Marked Theme functions in terms of their discourse semantic roles and realizations; and it offers descriptions of THEME and INFORMATION systems.

In summary, this book represents a pivotal contribution in the domain of SFLD, bridging past methodologies with future perspectives. It explicates the underlying reasoning in SFLD methodologies which remains more implicit in previous works, catering to the interests of descriptive linguists, systemic functional linguists, and theoretical linguists. Leveraging SFL theory and the practical reasoning delineated within this book, readers can adeptly craft comprehensive language descriptions of their own.

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