

Systemic Functional Grammar

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a usage-based theory of language founded on the assumption that language is shaped entirely by its various functions in the contexts in which it is used. The first of its kind, this book advances SFL by applying it comparatively to English, Spanish and Chinese. By analysing English alongside two other typologically very different major world languages, it shows how SFL can effectively address two central issues in linguistics – namely typology and universals. It concentrates in particular on argumentation, carefully explaining how descriptions of nominal group, verbal group and clause systems and structures are motivated, and draws on examples from key texts which display a full range of ideational, interpersonal and textual grammar resources. By working across three world languages from a text-based perspective, and demonstrating how grammar descriptions can be developed and improved, the book establishes the foundations for a groundbreaking functional approach to language typology.

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Systemic Functional Grammar

*A Text-Based Description of English,
Spanish and Chinese*

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Preface

This book was inspired by a series of meetings focusing on SFL language description, beginning at Shanghai Jiao Tong University (2015), and continuing at the Indonesia University of Education (2016), the University of Wollongong (July 2017), the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (November 2017), Boston College (July 2018), the University of Sydney (November 2018) and the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (July 2019).

As part of an international collaboration project (FRCA11720, VRA-PUC) a first draft was composed by Martin and Quiroz in the second semester of 2017 at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, during Martin's sabbatical there. This draft was then circulated among colleagues who generously provided feedback. We are deeply indebted to Yaegan Doran, Giacomo Figueredo, Jing Hao, Basthian Medina, Estela Moyano, Teresa Oteiza, Fernanda Rojas, Margarita Vidal and Dongbing Zhang for their comments and suggestions. A revision was then prepared by Martin and Quiroz in the second semester of 2018 at the University of Sydney, taking advantage of Quiroz's time there as a visiting research fellow. During this same semester, Wang, also a visiting fellow at the University of Sydney, began work on translation of the chapters into Chinese and preparation of the sections on Chinese grammar. This work was completed (with the help of Zhu Yongsheng for the translation into Chinese) in September 2019, and shortly after Wang returned to Shanghai.

Once a decision was made in 2021 to publish the book in English (rather than as the bilingual English/Chinese version first envisaged), Wang began work on translating the sections on Chinese grammar in Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 into English. Wang and Martin completed work on these sections over 2021 and 2022, alongside some minor editing and updating elsewhere in the book.

Our mentor, Michael Halliday, died in the middle of this project (in April 2018). He was aware of our endeavour and enthusiastically following reports of its development during the final year of his life. This book is our homage to his legacy, which has so inspired us all.