The Cambridge Handbook of Systemic Functional Linguistics

Presenting a field-defining overview of one of the most appliable linguistic theories available today, this Handbook surveys the key issues in the study of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), covering an impressive range of theoretical perspectives. With contributions from some of the world’s foremost SFL scholars, including M. A. K. Halliday, the founder of SFL theory, the Handbook covers topics ranging from the theory behind the model, discourse analysis within SFL, and applied SFL, to SFL in relation to various fields of research such as intonation, typology, clinical linguistics, and education. Chapters include discussion on the possible future directions in which research might be conducted and issues that can be further investigated and resolved. Readers will be inspired to pursue the challenges raised within the volume, both theoretically and practically.

Geoff Thompson (1947–2015) was an Honorary Senior Fellow at the University of Liverpool. He has published many journal articles, chapters, and edited volumes, including Evaluation in Context (2014, with L. Alba Juez), Text-Type and Texture (2009, with G. Forey), and System and Corpus: Exploring Connections (2006, with Susan Hunston).

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Geoff Thompson (1947–2015)
Generous scholar, loyal friend, and dedicated mentor

Photo: Courtesy of Susan Thompson. With thanks.

This volume was initiated by Geoff Thompson in 2014. The shape and flow of the contents reflect his vision for the handbook, and, from the start, Geoff took the lead in the editorial team in contacting contributors, editing, and commenting on the early contributor submissions. As a team of editors working together, we could never have imagined that we would not finish the volume together, and yet, in November 2015 we received the sad news that Geoff had suddenly passed away. We have retained Geoff as first editor of the volume as a way of recognizing his significant role in getting this volume off the ground and of remembering all he has done for us. We know that we speak for all the contributors in saying that we miss Geoff’s generosity and his scholarly insights very much. The volume is thus dedicated to him.

Lise, Wendy, and David
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Contributors


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Margaret Berry, now retired, was Reader in English Language at the University of Nottingham, UK. She has published introductory books on Systemic Linguistics: An Introduction to Systemic Linguistics, Vol. 1: Structures and Systems (1975) and An Introduction to Systemic Linguistics, Vol. 2: Levels and Links (1977). She has also published articles on a wide number of aspects of SFL, including context of situation, exchange structure, Theme and Rheme, Given and New, register variation, and the application of SFL to the teaching of English. Her current research interests are in context of situation, exchange structure, Theme and Rheme, and the written language of school children. She has lectured in China, Australia, and Canada, as well as in Europe. She was instrumental in the organization of a series of SFL workshops in Nottingham (1989–1992) which led to the formation of the European branch of the Systemic Functional Linguistics Association.

Wendy L. Bowcher is a Professor and the Director of the Functional Linguistics Institute at Sun Yat-sen University China. She is editor of Multimodal Texts from around the World: Cultural and Linguistic Insights (2012), co-editor (with T. D. Royce) of New Directions in the Analysis of Multimodal Discourse (2007/2014), co-editor (with B. A. Smith) of Systemic Phonology: Recent Studies in English (2014), and co-editor (with J. Y. Liang) of Society in Language: Language in Society: Essays in Honour of Ruqaiya Hasan.
(2015). Wendy was instrumental in the formation of the Japan Association of Systemic Functional Linguistics (JASFL) in 1993 and served for several years as the JASFL Vice-President. From 2011 to 2014 she was Vice-Chair of the International Systemic Functional Linguistics Association (ISFLA). Her research interests include the study of context in the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics, multimodal discourse analysis, and English intonation.

Christopher S. Butler took a degree in biochemistry at Oxford University and taught biochemistry for several years, but then moved to the area of linguistics, which he taught for twenty-five years in the UK, first at the University of Nottingham, then at what is now York St John University, where he held a Professorship in Linguistics. He took early retirement in 1998 in order to devote more time to research and writing. He holds an Honorary Professorship at Swansea University and is Visiting Professor at the University of Huddersfield. He has Honorary Doctorates from Ghent University, Belgium, and from the Universidad de La Rioja, Spain. He has published a number of books and more than eighty articles on a range of topics, including functional linguistics, computational and statistical techniques of language study, and corpus linguistics, especially as applied to the functionally oriented study of English and Spanish. His most significant book-length publications are Structure and Function: A Guide to Three Major Structural-Functional Theories, 2 volumes (2003) and Exploring Functional-Cognitive Space, co-authored with F. González-García (2014). He holds the Licentiatehip of the Royal Academy of Music in Pianoforte Performance. He is also interested in music analysis, and particularly in the relationships between music and language.


Heidi Byrnes is George M. Roth Distinguished Professor of German Emerita at Georgetown University. Her research focuses on adult L2 literacy acquisition, particularly at the advanced level. Those interests have been
shaped by Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics because of its concern with meaning-making in oral and written texts that are embedded in contexts of culture and contexts of situation and realized in culture-specific genres. Other influences are sociocultural theory, the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, and insights obtained in task-based teaching and learning. Together, these approaches have provided an educationally 'appliable' framework for the unique, integrated, articulated, four-year genre-oriented, and task-based curriculum in the German Department at Georgetown University. She has addressed diverse aspects of adult L2 learning in such a setting in journal publications (e.g. *Applied Linguistics Review*, *Language Teaching*, *Language Testing, Linguistics and Education, MLJ*), as well as chapters in numerous edited volumes, but particularly in the 2010 *MLJ* (94) monograph *Realizing Advanced Foreign Language Writing Development in Collegiate Education: Curricular Design, Pedagogy, Assessment* (co-authors, H. H. Maxim and J. M. Norris) and the co-edited volume (with R. M. Manchón), *Task-based Language Learning: Insights from and for L2 Writing*. She is a past president of AAAL, past editor-in-chief of the *Modern Language Journal*, and is the recipient of numerous professional association awards, including the Distinguished Scholarship and Service Award of AAAL.

**Eugeniu Costetchi** is a semantic architect at the European Publication Office via Infeurope S. A. in Luxembourg. His expertise centres on software development, computer programming and coding (e.g. Python, Java, and C++). His research interests focus on Semantic Web technologies, Ontology building methodologies, and Ontology quality metrics. He specializes in parsing English text within the Systemic Functional Linguistic framework. He is currently a PhD candidate in computational linguistics at the University of Bremen, focusing on natural language processing applicable to dialogue systems.

**Daniel Couto-Vale** is a researcher and dialogue system developer at SemanticEdge GmbH, Berlin, working with compositional and componential semantics for dialogue systems. In his portfolio, there are a series of deployed dialogue systems for call centres as well as tools for lexicogrammar building and dialogue system maintenance. Together with Dr Vivien Mast, he has published articles about speech recognition, miscommunication detection, imperative forms, and reference handling in different conferences on dialogue system and cognition.

**Meena Debashish** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Phonetics and Spoken English at The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India. The broad field of her research interest includes the interrelations of phonetics, intonation, grammar, and discourse. She has specialized in the study of speech sound, including Indian varieties of English, and has researched and taught over many years on the intonation of English.
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**Andy Fung** recently obtained his PhD from the Department of English at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. As a member of the PolySystemic Research Group, he has situated himself mostly within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and specializes in functional semantics. He also holds a part-time teaching position at the School of the Arts and Social Sciences, Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK), where he teaches linguistics in a Distance Learning (DL) module. His recent research contribution is the initial mapping of Cantonese message semantic networks, drawing on the descriptive insights of Hasan’s (1983) contextually open network of semantic options within the English system. He has also done work on register under the influence of Matthiessen’s context-based registerial cartography. Other research areas include political discourse, healthcare communication, and multimodal analysis. He has various research collaborations with scholars around the world, engaging in a number of international conferences, and contributing book chapters on semantic networks. He is currently involved in a large-scale government-funded research project on Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) entitled ‘Political Discourses in Hong Kong:
A Systemic Functional Perspective 2015–2018’, in which he is working with Dr Eden Li, Sum Hung, and two other colleagues from the OUHK, investigating the ways in which political ideologies are realized in political discourses though semantic and lexicogrammatical resources.

**M. A. K. Halliday** (1925–2018) came to linguistics through the study of Chinese (beginning in 1944) and through the influence of J. R. Firth, who took up the supervision of Halliday’s PhD at Cambridge University (1955). After teaching positions in Chinese at Cambridge, and at Edinburgh in General Linguistics, he took up the Headship of General Linguistics at University College, London (1965–1970). He was Foundation Professor in Linguistics at the University of Sydney, and Professor Emeritus from 1987. From Macquarie University to Athens, Halliday has also received at least eleven honorary doctorates, besides other awards.

Halliday sees himself primarily as a grammarian, and a ‘generalist’, integrating semantic resources across all the strata of language, including context. He developed a model organized around ‘meaning potential’ (reflecting Firth’s injunction that ‘meaning is made at all levels’). Such a model became possible with Halliday’s characteristic tool – the system network: his mode of mapping the choices that have semantic consequences within the major functions of language. These metafunctions encompass the more specific systems, thereby giving Halliday’s neo-Firthian approach its technical title: Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Through eleven volumes of his Collected Works, there are few areas of language study to which Halliday has not turned his deep analysis and lucid expository style. This has meant that his influence has spread across a range of disciplines, from linguistic typology, education, and on to neuroscience – in fact any field that needs an ‘appliable linguistics’.

**Tuomo Hiippala** is an Assistant Professor of English Language and Digital Humanities at the University of Helsinki. His current research focuses on applications of computer vision and machine learning to multimodality research. His major publications include *The Structure of Multimodal Documents* (2015) and *Multimodality: Foundations, Research and Analysis*, co-authored with J. A. Bateman and J. Wildfeuer (2017).

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**Abhishek Kumar Kashyap** is a Research Professor in the School of Foreign Languages, Sun Yat-sen University, China. He received his PhD in
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research in all these areas in well-known journals, e.g. Journal of
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of Language, and Word. He is currently co-editing a special issue of
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Francis Robert Low retired from the Department of English, at the Hong
Kong Polytechnic University, in December 2016. His area of study and
research was Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) specializing in
Multimodality and Multisemiotics. His main contributions in recent
years mainly include ‘text+’ which is a model for multisemiotic resources
integration in meaning-making and quantification of images. He has also
done work on natural language processes in machines, image theory
development, and image typology influenced by Matthiessen’s work.
Other research areas include time and space in comics, image archiving,
image analysis software for teaching and research, films, and
interdisciplinary curriculum such as multiliteracies, classroom
discourse, images in public health education, images in adverts, and
business websites. He has been involved in various research
collaborations with scholars around the world in the areas of
multimodality, semi-artificial intelligence (SAI) on natural language
cross-over with machines, business communication, and multiliteracies,
and with Eija Ventola of Aalto University, Finland, on communication in
marketing and advertising. Throughout his career, Low frequently
presented his research at international conferences, and between
2012–2016 he conducted workshops and research discussions at various
universities in China and other parts of the world, such as Sun Yat-sen
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J. R. Martin is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Sydney, where he
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collection of interviews with Wang Zhenhua: Interviews with J. R. Martin
(2015), a book with S. Dreyfus, S. Humphrey, and A. Mahboob on
teaching academic discourse on-line: Genre Pedagogy in Higher Education
(2016), and a book with M. Zappavigna on Youth Justice Conferencing: *Discourse and Diversionary Justice* (2017). Eight volumes of his collected papers, edited by W. Zhenhua, have been published in China (2010, 2012). Professor Martin was elected a fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 1998, and was Head of its Linguistics Section 2010–2012; he was awarded a Centenary Medal for his services to Linguistics and Philology in 2003. In April 2014 Shanghai Jiao Tong University opened its Martin Centre for Appliable Linguistics.


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**Donna R. Miller** holds the Chair of English Linguistics at the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the University of Bologna, where she coordinates its English Language Studies Program and heads the Department’s Centre for Linguistic-Cultural Studies (CeSLiC). Her research has largely focused on register analysis in a Hallidayan perspective, particularly on institutional text types, while her corpus-assisted investigations – including those of literature – have typically examined the grammar of speaker evaluation in terms of appraisal systems. For example, see D. R. Miller. 2016. On Negotiating the Hurdles of Corpus-assisted Appraisal Analysis. In S. Gardner and S. Alsop, eds., *Systemic Functional Linguistics in the Digital Age*.

In recent years Miller has actively taken up the defence of Ruqaiya Hasan’s framework for the study of that register which is like no other, *Verbal Art*, and also reflected intensely on Jakobson’s potential place within it. For example, see D. R. Miller. 2016. Jakobson’s place in Hasan’s Social Semiotic Stylistics: ‘Pervasive Parallelism’ as Symbolic Articulation of Theme. In W. L. Bowcher and J. Y. Liang, eds., *Society in Language, Language in Society: Essays in Honour of Ruqaiya Hasan*. In addition, see D. R. Miller and A. Luporini. 2018. Systemic Socio-Semantic Stylistics (SSS) as

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**Gerard O’Grady** is a Reader at the Centre for Language and Communication Research at Cardiff University. His chief research interests are intonation, spoken information structure, and CDA. He is the co-editor of *The Routledge Handbook of Systemic Functional Linguistics* (2017), the author of the monograph *A Grammar of Spoken English Discourse: The Intonation of*
Increments (2010/12) and has published numerous articles in journals such as Text and Talk, English Text Construction, Journal of Pragmatics, Functions of Language, and The International Review of Pragmatics.

Kay L. O’Halloran is Professor in the School of Education, Faculty of Humanities and a member of the Curtin Institute for Computation at Curtin University, Australia. Her areas of research include multimodal analysis, social semiotics, mathematics discourse, and the development of interactive digital media technologies and visualization techniques for multimodal and sociocultural analytics. She is editor of the Routledge Studies in Multimodality series.

David Schönthal is a Research Associate at Cardiff University. He has previously lectured at Cardiff University on functional grammar, lexicology, lexicography, and psycholinguistics. His main research interests are different approaches to grammar, such as functional grammar and construction grammar, the meaning of words, and the implementation of a multimethod approach. Specifically, he is interested in the English nominal group and the functions of the relator of, on which he completed his doctoral thesis in 2016. He is further passionate about pedagogy, andragogy, and the teaching of academic writing, and is offering writing and grammar support sessions to undergraduate and postgraduate students at Cardiff University. David is also co-author of Referring in Language: An Integrated Approach (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

Anke Schulz is a Lecturer at the University of Bremen, Germany. Her main research areas are corpus linguistics, Systemic Functional Grammar, and English—German contrastive linguistics. She completed her PhD research at the Technical University of Darmstadt, Germany, focusing on a corpus-based, contrastive study of English and German computer-mediated communication.

Erich Steiner, born 1954 in Heidelberg, Germany, studied English and German Philology in Freiburg, Saarbrücken, Cardiff, Reading, and London (GB), and has held posts in Saarbrücken, Luxembourg, and Darmstadt. He has served as Head of Department, Pro-Dean, and Dean at the University of Saarland in Saarbrücken. Since 1990, he has been Chair of English Linguistics and Translation Studies, later on English Translation Studies, Department of Language Science and Technology, University of Saarland, Saarbrücken. His major research interests include Functional Linguistics, Translation Theory, and Comparative Linguistics, as well as empirical linguistics more generally. He has attracted major research projects from the European Union (ESPRIT/FRAMEWORK, LEONARDO, MINERVA), as well as from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG/German Research Council) and the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD/German Academic Exchange Service). Over the past thirty years he has been Visiting Professor at Rice University, Houston, Texas, at the University of

Sabine Tan is a Senior Research Fellow in the School of Education, Faculty of Humanities at Curtin University. Her research interests include critical multimodal discourse analysis, social semiotics, and visual communication. She is particularly interested in the application of multidisciplinary perspectives within social semiotic theory to the analysis of institutional discourses involving traditional and new media.

Miriam Taverniers is Associate Professor of Functional Approaches to English Linguistics at Ghent University. Her research into the nature of grammatical metaphor in Systemic Functional Linguistics (PhD, 2002) led to a deep interest in fundamentally theoretical concepts, especially the design and conception of differentiating dimensions and theoretical categories in structural-functional and semiotically oriented linguistic frameworks (such as the relation between lexis and grammar; stratification, esp. the syntax-semantics interface; the relation between instance, norm/register, and system; syntagmatic layering and functional diversity; the concept of ‘construction’ and its relation to paradigmatic modelling in functional theories). She also works on more descriptive topics, but always with a special dedication to what a scrutiny of those topics can contribute to our understanding of the theoretical issues mentioned above. Current descriptive interests include, in addition to grammatical metaphor patterns, (secondary) predication and labile verbs in relation to ergativity/unaccusativity and in a contrastive perspective.

Geoff Thompson (1947–2015) was an Honorary Senior Fellow at the University of Liverpool. Before his retirement he was Senior Lecturer in Applied Linguistics in the School of English. He also held honorary

Jonathan J. Webster was Head of the Department of Chinese, Translation and Linguistics at City University of Hong Kong for more than ten years. He is currently Director of The Halliday Centre for Intelligent Applications of Language Studies, which has the unique advantage of being the only research centre worldwide bearing the name of this distinguished, globally renowned scholar in linguistics, M. A. K. Halliday. The Centre is committed to doing appliable linguistic research, including corpus linguistics, discourse studies, visual analytics for texts, language learning, linguistic studies of world languages and minority languages, and translation.

He has actively contributed to studies in language and linguistics through his role as editor of the collected works of several leading scholars, including M. A. K. Halliday, R. Hasan, S. Lamb, and B. B. Kachru. He recently authored Understanding Verbal Art: A Functional Linguistic Approach (2015), and co-authored with M. A. K. Halliday Text Linguistics: The How and Why of Meaning (2014).

Since 2005, Jonathan has served as the founding Editor of Linguistics and the Human Sciences, a journal devoted to exploring the relationships between linguistics and other areas of scholarly concern, including but not limited to history, sociology, politics, archaeology, religious studies, translation, and the study of art. He is also one of the founding Editors – along with Professor Huang Guowen and Professor He Wei – of the Journal of World Languages, and is the Managing Editor of WORD, the journal of the International Linguistics Association, headquartered in New York and published since 1945.
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Michele Zappavigna is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Arts and Media at the University of New South Wales. Her major research interest is in ambient affiliation and social media. Recent books in this area include Discourse of Twitter and Social Media (2012), Researching the Language of Social Media, (with R. Page, J. Unger, and D. Barton) (2014), and Searchable Talk: Hashtags and Social Media Metadiscourse (2018).
Preface

This volume has been several years in the making. It was first conceived of in 2013, when Cambridge University Press approached Lise Fontaine with the possibility of including a *Handbook on Systemic Functional Linguistics* as part of its series of Handbooks on Language and Linguistics. Recognizing this as a wonderful opportunity, Lise, Geoff Thompson, and Wendy Bowcher discussed the possibility of co-editing the volume. It was decided that Geoff would take the lead, and in consultation with various scholars, including Michael Halliday, he developed the conceptual framework for the book – a volume with a comprehensive, somewhat historical but also forward-looking overview of Systemic Functional Linguistics. Later, after Geoff’s untimely death, David Schönthal was invited to join the editorial team. As editors, we encouraged contributors to include both theoretical and practical details where possible – the latter noted by Halliday in personal correspondence as being an important part of the character of a ‘handbook’. Finding contributors to this volume was difficult, but in a positive way, as there are so many scholars around the world with expertise in the various areas covered who could have been approached. The final line-up, we feel, offers a wide scope of perspectives from a range of established and emerging scholars, some expert in more than the field of research which they have written about in this volume. We would like to take a moment here to thank all our contributors for the effort and expertise they have brought to this collection. Readers will notice that at the beginning of some of the chapters there is a note of tribute to several scholars who have passed away since the volume’s inception: Chapter 4 pays tribute to Geoff Thompson (see also the tribute to Geoff at the beginning of this volume), Chapter 7 to Bill Greaves, Chapter 23 to Johnathan Fine, and Chapter 26 to Ruqaiya Hasan. We felt it was important to include these tributes – to Geoff himself as the person who really got this project off the ground, and to Geoff and all the other scholars who have been such an important influence not only in the development of the
theory and practice of Systemic Functional Linguistics evident throughout the book, but in their commitment to furthering the field through their encouragement, generosity, and dedication to mentoring SFL scholars around the world. In the final stages of preparing the manuscript, we became aware that Emeritus Professor Michael Halliday, the founder of Systemic Functional Linguistics did not have long to live. It was not long after we had submitted the manuscript that he passed away, on 15 April 2018. It is a great privilege and honour to have included in the volume Chapter 24 ‘Language and Science, Language in Science, and Linguistics as Science’, which he co-authored with David Butt. After enquiring as to whether this was the last work that Michael Halliday penned, David Butt kindly offered to write a brief note on the nature of the co-authorship of this chapter. This note is presented at the end of Chapter 24.
Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Mr Xie Xiao (Orlando) for his help in preparing some of the figures included in this volume. We would also like to thank Lucy Chrispin, Xiaoguang Nie (Tana), Junyu Zhang, and Qianqian Zhang for their assistance during the preparation of the index.