

The Discourse of History

Taking a Systemic Functional Linguistic perspective, this book explores how language builds our knowledge about the past and gives value to historical events, thereby shaping contemporary culture. It brings together cutting-edge research from an international team of scholars to provide a detailed study of texts from three different world languages (English, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese) – revealing how the discourse of history is constructed in these languages. Each chapter provides examples and step-by-step analyses of how knowledge and value are constructed in history texts, drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics to develop theory and description in relation to text analysis. It also makes connections with disciplinary literacy and history education, showing how linguistic findings can benefit the teaching and learning of historical literacy. Providing theoretical and analytical foundations for studies of the discourse of history, it is essential reading for anyone interested in literacy, discourse analysis, and language description.

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A Systemic Functional Linguistic Perspective

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Preface

The planning for this book was initiated by Jing Hao in 2020. Jing had recently taken up a position at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, following on from her doctoral training in Sydney under Jim Martin's supervision and a post-doctoral position in Hong Kong. Back in 2015 after finishing her PhD project on ideational meaning in scientific discourse, Jing worked with Jim as a research assistant studying history teaching in Australian secondary school classrooms – as part of the PEAK project funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery grant (DP130100481). Later, as part of her research project in Chile – funded by the National Fund for Scientific and Technological Development (FONDECYT 3190498) – Jing began work on historical discourse in Mandarin Chinese.

Accordingly, Jing and Jim decided to co-edit this volume and drew together an exciting range of authors specialising in English, Spanish and Chinese – some very experienced in the analysis of history discourse and others bringing new voices into the field. We are grateful to our authors for their forbearance and tenacity as they drafted and redrafted chapters during Covid times. Understandably, we weren't able to get together face-to-face to share ideas, but through Zoom meetings and cycles of careful editing, we managed, we feel, to make up for the missing seminars and conferencing. We look forward to us all getting together again to celebrate this collection before too long.