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## **Introduction**

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### **Why do we write this book?**

As a matter of fact, we are motivated to work on this book by two of our encounters in academia. The first encounter was with Dr. Li from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 2015. By that time, we had not yet started our thesis writing process and were simply two naïve novice scholars. One day, Dr. Li, who was assigned to be the examiner of Bo Wang's thesis proposal on applying Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to drama translation (Wang 2017, later published as Wang & Ma 2020), invited Bo Wang to his office to discuss about Bo Wang's thesis proposal. During the talk, Li was very critical of the proposal and his criticism was mainly on the following points:

- \* Systemic functional translation studies is a term that one cannot use, because he has never heard of this term and it is simply a term for laymen.
- \* The logical metafunction is something that he never knows, therefore it must be made up by Bo Wang to fool him.

After meeting Dr. Li, Bo Wang felt discouraged but was encouraged by Professor Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen, who kindly agreed to supervise Bo Wang's thesis. Despite the challenges, we were further "inspired" by Li and eventually wrote a book titled *Systemic Functional Translation Studies* (Wang & Ma 2021) that provides a survey of the research area of applying SFL to translation.

Our second encounter was with Dongfeng Wang from Sun Yat-sen University, where Bo Wang used to work from 2018 to 2021. In early 2021, at a meeting where candidates were supposed to defend themselves in order to be promoted, Dongfeng

Wang, as the only scholars working on translation who attended the meeting, attacked the systemic functional approach to translation vehemently. One can sense such venomousness towards the area from the points he made:

- \* SFL is never a holistic theory of language. It only involves the study of grammar and is never capable of examining phonetics, phonology, semantics and context.
- \* SFL can never be applied to study literary texts, because Halliday did not include the “poetic function” as one of the metafunctions. In that sense, stylistics must be a better theoretical approach than SFL.
- \* If your analysis cannot tell me whether a translation is good or bad, your study is then a failure.
- \* Since your study (i.e. Wang & Ma 2020) is so problematic, this book then requires major revision and should never be published.

On that occasion, Bo Wang was silenced whenever he attempted to answer the queries. But as researchers with some knowledge about SFL, we all know how comical and ridiculous Dongfeng Wang’s accounts are. We are then aware that not all the so-called experts have the expertise of this area of research, even if he/she publicly insisted that he was an expert of this area.

In addition to the two encounters, we are fortunate enough to have met various important scholars in the area of systemic functional translation studies (SFTS). For some scholars, we have met them in person and conducted face-to-face interviews with them, including Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen, Erich Steiner and J.R. Martin. For some scholars, however, due to the outbreak of COVID-19, we have to meet them virtually and chat online with them; these scholars include Juliane House, Jeremy Munday, Adriana Pagano and Akila Sellami-Baklouti. Despite of the mode of interaction, the semiotic engagements with them are intriguing and enlightening as well.

### **What's in this book?**

This book is a collection of 8 interviews with 7 key scholars who have conducted various seminal studies in systemic functional translation studies (SFTS). These interviews serve to provide a comprehensive account of SFTS and is expected to be an important reference for scholars and students working in this area. In this way, we plan to achieve the following goals by writing this book:

- (i) to introduce the key scholars in the area and their research;
- (ii) to provide an overview of SFTS;
- (iii) to summarize the contributions of SFTS;
- (iv) to offer directions for future research in SFTS.

Thus, this book is similar to Anderson et al.'s (2015) collected volume of interviews on social semiotics in having a unified theme and in being written in an engaging dialogic mode. It not only provides a unique perspective on the theoretical development and future outlooks of SFTS, but also enriches our understanding of SFTS. Further, this book, written for students and scholars who are interested in SFTS, draws a vivid picture of SFTS thriving among the landscape of translation studies, and of SFL as one kind of applicable linguistics ready to be applied to solve various research questions.

In the 8 interviews, the questions are tailor-made for the interviewees according to their research backgrounds and are aimed to provide a revealing account of the following topics:

- (i) the seminal studies on applying SFL to translation conducted by the interviewees,
- (ii) the basic concepts in SFTS as reflected in the interviewees' studies,

- (iii) the projects that the interviewees are currently engaged in during the time of the interview,
- (iv) the interviewees' plans of future studies or studies needed in SFTS,
- (v) the contributions of SFTS to SFL and translation studies.

Then, based on the questions we prepared, we interviewed the scholars, recorded the interviews, transcribed the recordings, and edited the transcriptions with the interviewees' help.

Finally, taking this chance, we would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the seven interviewees for their trust and support, for their time and energy devoted to this project as well as for their generosity in sharing their knowledge and experiences with us. We also thank Prof. Huang Guowen, Prof. Chang Chenguang, Dr. Chris Shei, Prof. Yu Hui, Prof. Miao Xingwei, Prof. Donna R. Miller, Dr. Jorge Arús-Hita and Dr. Pattama Patpong, who helped us during the preparation of this book. We thank Valery Hall and Equinox publishing for permission to reproduce the four papers (i.e. Chapters 1–3 in this book) originally published in *Linguistics and the Human Sciences*.

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