

Recent Advances in Systemic Functional Translation Studies

-- Introduction and Evaluation of Systemic Functional Linguistics and Translation Studies

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Abstract

The integration of systemic functional linguistics and translation studies is another development trend of translation studies. *Systemic Functional Linguistics and Translation Studies*, published in 2021, focuses on both the theoretical issues of systemic functional linguistics and translation studies and the practical applications of the above-mentioned theories. This collection of papers provides direction and enlightenment for the study of systemic functional translation in the aspects of "what to study" and "how to study".

Keywords

Systemic functional linguistics; Translation studies; Linguistic system; Linguistic function; Translation process; Discourse analysis.

1. Introduction

Systemic Functional Linguistics and Translation Studies was published by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc in 2021. It is part of the Bloomsbury Advances in Translation series. Its chief editors are Mira Kim, Jeremy Munday, Zhenhua Wang and Pin Wang. These editors are famous scholars in related fields at home and abroad. This collection brings together the work of leaders and up-and-comers in the field of systemic functional linguistics and translation studies. These research results mainly focus on the important and difficult problems in systemic functional linguistics and translation interface research, and jointly explore the general rules and specific strategies to solve these problems [1].

These collected papers show that the theory of systemic functional linguistics provides an applicable model for discourse analysis, which in turn contributes to translation research and practice in a variety of contexts. The supporting role provided by systemic functional linguistics theory varies according to different research objectives. The research orientation can be from systemic functional linguistics to translation application research, or from translation research problems to systematic functional linguistic methods. This collection explores and applies different systemic-functional language models, including lexico-grammatical model, discourse semantic model, and register variant models such as field, tenor, and mode. Some cases also explore specific linguistic systems, such as grammatical tense system, discourse evaluation, cohesion and other semantic systems. The research in this collection also focuses on a series of methodological discussions, diversified use of research data, and source and target language analysis.

2. The Contents of the Book

Systematic Functional Linguistics and Translation Studies consists of ten chapters. These ten chapters are about the systematic functional language theory interpretation of the linguistic relational model, and the research is still evolving. This research topic is a fundamental issue in language typology and translation studies. This collection is organized as follows: Chapters 1 to 5 aim to explore and solve the theoretical problems of systemic functional linguistics and translation studies, and chapters 6 to 10 focus more on the practical application of the above-mentioned theories.

The first chapter, written by J.R. Martin and Beatriz Quiroz, explains and illustrates Matthiessen's model of multilingual similarities and differences. It also discusses its relevance to the equivalence theory, a fundamental issue concerned by translation studies [2]. The models of differences and similarities between language systems are constructed in the form of a continuum. The continuum develops around multiple dimensions such as hierarchy and precision in the theoretical system of systemic functional linguistics. The development trend around these dimensions (for example, the level change from lexical grammar level to discourse semantic level, from structural entity to language system, and from smaller information units to larger information units) matches the development and change trajectory of language systems from different end to the same end. The translation or interpretation process from the source language to the target language obtains the resources of the target language system or the source language system which is the same or different according to the degree of similarities and differences between the language systems. In this chapter, the author calls this translation process distantiation. de Souza refers to the target text of the translation as re-instantiation of the language. [3] In this chapter, the author establishes a model for the translation process of language re-instantiation by studying the Chilean Spanish system and the English system and comparing a series of short texts between the two languages in detail.

In Chapter 2, Erich Steiner, based on Martin and White's reading model, examines the concept of "reading" in systemic functional linguistics and explores its relevance to translation activities. [4] The author elaborates on the key concept of "language re-instantiation" introduced in Chapter 1. The translation process is described as a continuum of linguistic meaning potential. This continuum forms a specific textual entity from the level of the broadest language whole system through the constraints of different factors such as style, register and text type, and finally ends with reading the text. This text is called the ultimate text form by the author.

In Chapter 3, Stella Neumann focuses on Halliday's conceptualization of register in systemic functional linguistics and its relevance to text type theory in translation studies. The author points out that, unlike earlier studies on text types, the theory of register structure in systemic functional linguistics can provide solid theoretical support for the context analysis of source texts and the context analysis of target texts. The core content of this chapter is to explore how register changes in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural contexts, and how to use corpus research methods in translation studies to identify lexical grammatical shifts in translation equivalent operations in response to cross-cultural register changes.

In Chapter 4, Jeremy Munday rigorously discusses the possibility of a dialogue between theories of systemic functional linguistics and translation studies. The author pays special attention to interpersonal meaning issues related to subjective attitudes and positions, which are of common interest to the above two disciplines, and how systemic functional linguistics evaluation systems embodied in discourse are applied to translation studies. The authors hope to find some way to further improve the complex language system to highlight the language dimensions most relevant to translation practice. The authors pay particular attention to the hierarchical subsystem of evaluation systems and the potential for modulating the intensity of evaluation meaning in translation.

The fifth chapter, written by Ekaterina Lapshinova-Koltunski, focuses on the interaction between corpus-based translation studies and systemic functional linguistics. Corp-based methodologies have greatly influenced systemic functional linguistics and translation studies by providing access to and analysis of large text databases. In this chapter, the author discusses the theoretical basis and practical application of these empirical methods. The research style of this chapter just reflects the research characteristics of the integration of theory and practice in the whole collection of papers.

Chapter 6 to Chapter 10 focuses on the application of systemic functional linguistics theory in different translation scenarios, aiming at systematically identifying the source text and systematically comparing the source text with the target text and different versions of the target text. These studies include systematic functional linguistic analysis of existing translations within the framework of descriptive translatology and the application of systematic functional linguistic theory to translator training.

3. Brief Review

Systemic functional linguistics has a long history of focusing on translation studies. From Malinowski, Firth, Halliday, Catford, House, Newmark, Bell, Baker, Hatim, Mason to Matthiessen, all of them are applying functional linguistics theories to translation research and practice. The ideas and theories of functional linguistics that they pay attention to include: contextual thought, lexical grammatical meaning selection, hierarchical categorical grammar, register, discourse genre, cohesion, coherence and metafunction [5]. As a cross-cultural and interdisciplinary research field, translation studies need to learn from the theories and methodologies of related disciplines to develop and standardize their own research methods. Systemic functional linguistics can provide reference for translation studies in this respect [6]. The integration of systemic functional linguistics and translation studies has both historical origin and foundation, and also has practical and theoretical significance. This collection of papers provides direction and inspiration for the aspects of "what to study" and "how to study". First, the anthology explores the depth of the study of system functional translation and enhances the explanatory and predictive power of this research field. According to Matthiessen, translation is the process of interpreting or transforming experience into meaning. Translation is the process of reproducing interpreted experiences in one language system into another language system. Language system plays a very important role in translation. Inter-lingual translation is a conversion operation between the same linguistic meaning system, and the translator's main task is to match the lexical grammar system and semantic system between the two languages [7].

This anthology explores in depth the important theoretical and applied value of the perspective of systemic functional linguistics in translation. Chapter one discusses the important application value of the model of similarities and differences between language systems in translation. The translator can make a reasonable choice among various language subsystems or language resources. For example, the translator can choose the corresponding language resources matching the target language according to the level and precision subsystem of the source language, lexical grammar layer, discourse semantic layer, structural entity, information unit and so on. This chapter illustrates exactly that the process of translation is the process of making multiple choices in logic, experience, interpersonal and textual systems at the same time, and the translation is the product of multiple choices [5]. The research results in this chapter have a general guiding significance for translation studies, providing a solid theoretical foundation of systemic-functional language for translation practice, and providing systematic macro-methodological support. The research in this chapter can help the translator to predict the possible problems in the translation process by analyzing the differences between the

language system of the source language and the target language, explain the faults in the translation process, and try to solve the translation problems with the translation path of the system function. The register system discussed in Chapter 3 and the interpersonal meaning system discussed in chapter 4 also have important theoretical guiding significance for translation studies, and provide more specific methodological guidance, which can help translators better complete the equivalent translation process or translation conversion process. Chapter 10 discusses the importance of multilingual system comparison in translation studies from the perspective of systems-functional linguistics, and points out that Saussure's concept of "value" has a core significance in translation studies. This concept of "value" is the real basis of language comparison and translation transformation, which makes the process of language comparison and translation operation possible.

Second, the anthology expands the scope of the study of system functional translation. It is found that Chinese and foreign journal papers in this field mainly focus on textual cohesion, thematic and information structure, text hierarchy, translation units, symbols and multimodality, as well as the translator's attitude and evaluation language in the target text [6]. This collection expands and enriches the study of systemic-functional translation, adding studies on the relationship between language systems and translation (e.g., Chapters 1, 3, 4, 10), translation reading models in systemic-functional linguistics (Chapter 2), and translation studies of paratextual features (Chapter 9).

Translation practice consists of three interwoven and mutually reinforcing processes: understanding, expression and adaptation. The process of understanding is not only to understand the linguistic characteristics of the source language, but also to understand the content meaning of the source language. The process of expression and adaptation should deal with not only the linguistic form of the target text, but also the presentation form of the meaning of the target text [8]. Chapter 1, Chapter 3, Chapter 4 and Chapter 10 on language systems and subsystems can help translators to understand, express and adapt. The conceptual system and textual system of language can help the translator choose the appropriate expression form of transitive process and discourse cohesion form, and the interpersonal system of language can help the translator rationally express the interpersonal meaning of the target text. The register system of a language can help the translator to analyze the linguistic context and social and cultural background of the source language, so as to help the translator to have a deep understanding, reasonable language expression and clever adaptation based on the differences of bilingual register. The functional reading model in Chapter 2 is helpful to the translator's translation comprehension process and lays a solid language foundation for the expression and adaptation process. In Chapter 9, the research on the translation of paratexts gives the translator the following enlightenment: functional language system research can effectively help the translator complete the process of understanding, expression and adaptation of paratexts, and can produce good contextual effects and cross-cultural communication effects.

Third, the anthology expands the methodology of systematic functional translation research, breaks through the traditional theoretical research paradigm, and introduces multiple empirical research methods.

The corpus research method adopted in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 helps systemic-functional translation researchers empirically explore the salient linguistic features of relevant language pairs and find out the corresponding translation paths based on huge linguistic data. In Chapter 6, the qualitative research based on grounded theory contributes to the comparative analysis of translation and the decision-making process of translation. In chapter 7, we use the descriptive translation approach based on systemic functional linguistics to analyze the translation strategies of interpersonal meaning in text. Chapter 8 proves the positive effect of systemic functional linguistics theory on translation practice by means of experimental research. Chapter 9 explores the translation strategies of sub-texts by using the multimodal

approach of social semiotics. The multiple empirical research methods under the care of systemic functional linguistics jointly support the research framework of systemic functional translation. The conclusions obtained from the research framework can in turn enhance the explanatory and predictive power of the research framework.

Fourth, the anthology focuses on the practical orientation of systemic-functional translation studies, and the research results are oriented towards translation teaching and training as well as translation practice. The descriptive analysis model of systemic functional linguistics discussed in chapter 7 is beneficial to translation teaching and training, and can help translation learners master the analytical tools of systemic functional linguistics, quickly find out the significant linguistic features of the source language and make reasonable translation transformations, so as to help promote their translation practice ability. The results of the experimental research in Chapter 8 give us the enlightenment that the translator training teachers should increase the teaching of systematic functional language theory in the translation teaching training. This teaching measure is beneficial to help improve the training effect of high-level translators, and is conducive to improving the translation literacy and practical ability of high-level translators.

Fifth, the research of this collection is based on translation process or translation text analysis. The "absence" of systematic functional analysis of interpreting processes or interpreting texts is a fly in the ointment for researchers or readers in the field. The addition of system-functional interpretation studies will greatly improve the puzzle of system-functional translation studies. In addition, the anthology contains a large number of technical terms, which is difficult for the general reader to understand. However, the large number of charts and graphs in the papers helps researchers and readers to understand the theoretical exploration and empirical analysis of the relevant research in the papers.

4. Conclusion

It is a new attempt to study translation problems or translations through the approach of functional linguistics. Systematic Functional Linguistics and Translation Studies has further expanded the depth and breadth of systematic functional translation studies, and further standardized the empirical research. The integration of systemic functional linguistics and translation advocated by this collection points out a new direction for the study of systemic functional translation.

Systemic functional linguistics is applicable linguistics, which is constructed based on the theory of meaning relations, and its ultimate goal is to establish functional semantics to achieve the overall description of meaning. The development of eco-linguistics, which places language and linguistic research in a social context, aims to solve various language-related problems in the real society. Based on the social value orientation of systemic functional linguistics, further introduction of "ecological translation perspective" is conducive to the in-depth development of functional translation studies. This perspective will help translators to analyze the linguistic form of the source language and understand its content meaning based on the linguistic ecological environment composed of language, culture and communication, and make adaptive choices, so as to complete the translation process more effectively.

The introduction of empirical paradigms of cognitive translation studies, such as thinking aloud, keyboarding, eye tracking, higher-order mathematical statistics and "triangulation", will greatly promote the integration of systemic functional translation studies and cognitive translation studies. This kind of integrated research can not only bring into play the systematicness, practicability and operability of systematic functional translation studies, but also bring into play the empirical, explanatory and predictive power of cognitive translation studies.

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Annotations

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