

## Book Reviews

*An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics* by Suzanne Eggins 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd., 2004. pp. 384, Rs. 1245

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*An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics* is an updated overview of the concepts and methods of linguistic analysis in the framework developed by M. A. K. Halliday. The book introduces the concepts and demonstrates how the techniques of systemic functional linguistic theory can be applied to the analysis of texts. Written in ascending order, the book begins with the general understanding of language use and gradually moves into the more complex and sophisticated linguistic analysis. At the end, the reader who may not have prior knowledge of systemic functional linguistics, feels quite equipped with the conceptual clarity to deal with both the dimensions of systemic functional theory of language: these dimensions are (a) theory of language as social process (what language is, how it works, its relation with context and (b) analytical methodology (analysis of transitivity, mood, theme and the clause complex etc.)

Organized into eleven chapters, the book has the foreword summarizing changes in the second edition, an appendix which provides detailed analysis of texts and a bibliography. The first chapter, 'An overview of systemic functional linguistics' aims at the orientation: the author attempts to initiate a dialogue with the reader and sets out to give an overview of systemic functional linguistics. The chapter introduces many key concepts and terms to the readers which are developed in detail in subsequent chapters. Besides explaining a functional semantic approach to language, the author provides text examples with the answer the answers to the questions concerning the systemic functional approach to language: (1) How do people use language? (2) How is language structured for use?

In order to clarify the basic unit, the second chapter, 'What is (a) text' explains The concept of "text" and what the nature of text tell us

about the organization of language as a text forming resource. The author distinguishes between “a text” and “a non-text”, by explaining the concepts of texture, cohesion and coherence with the help of examples. Reminding the readers of the Hallidayan concept of text, which refers to both spoken and written forms, the author says, “text is a technical term for any unified piece of language that has the properties of texture.”

In the third chapter, ‘Genre: culture of context in texts’, the author explores the dimensions of contextual coherence, that of “genre” by interpreting “genre” as the cultural purpose of texts and examines how texts express “genres” through structural and realizational patterns of language. The chapter reconnoiters how texts are coherent in terms of their cultural context, through the notion of genre. Concepts of “register configuration”, “schematic structure” the uses of “genre analysis” and “critical genre analysis” are discussed with examples in both written and spoken English.

Having explored how texts are coherent with respect to their cultural context, the fourth chapter, ‘Register: Context of situation in text’ looks more closely at how texts are coherent with respect to their context of situation through the concept of register. The author explores answers to the following questions: (1) what is meant by context of situation and the register variables? (2) how is register realized in language? The author deals with the idea of context of situation by answering the basic problems like why does context matters and how context gets into text? The pivot of the chapter is the register theory around which the three variables of field, tenor and mode revolve. The author concludes with a clear illustration of the relationship between the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions and the register.

The fifth chapter, ‘Introduction to the Lexico-grammar’ begins by exploring the lexico-grammatical level of language by asking: what is the function of grammar? Why does language have this intermediate level of grammatical coding? Examining the basic principles of systematic functional linguistic grammatical analysis the author presents the multifunctional perspective on the clause that is developed in the following chapters. Assuming that language allows us to mean anything we wish to mean and that language enables us to make more than one meaning at a time, the author describes how language can take a finite number of expression units to realize an infinite number of meanings we need to express in our daily life. The focus of the chapter is on principles of grammatical analysis dealing with concepts such as constituents, the rank scale, bracketing, and embedding in the clause constituents.

In systemic functional linguistic terms, the interpersonal meaning is one level of meaning in the clause. The sixth chapter, 'The grammar of interpersonal meaning: mood' explores how the clause is structured to enable us to express interpersonal meanings, by dealing with Mood structure of the clause. The author in the chapter explores the relationship between functional constituents and their configurations in clauses of different Mood types and looks at the role of modality in interaction. The chapter focuses on Mood structures of the clause in terms of exchanging information and exchanging goods and services, and the role of modality (modalization and modulation) in interaction.

Having looked at how people use language in text in chapter 2 and how the clause is structured to enable to express interpersonal meanings, the seventh chapter, 'Systems: meaning as choice' deals with the systemic aspects of the theory, the systemic modeling of meaning as choice. In order to explain the concepts of semiotic system, that how a sign in a semiotic system gets its meaning through entering into both paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations with other signs. To illustrate this, the chapter presents a simple semiotic system of traffic lights and then the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes with respect to relation between linguistic signs. The chapter focuses on the concept of system and issues related to the notion that there is a relationship between system and structure. Another issue focused in the chapter is the priority of paradigmatic relations in systemic functional linguistics.

The eighth chapter, 'The grammar of experiential meaning: Transitivity' explores the component of the ideational metafunction which is concerned with how we represent reality in language. The chapter focuses on the description of the system of transitivity which is about the process types associated with participant roles and configurations. Different process types (Material, Mental, Relational, Verbal, Behavioural, existential) are explained with examples and diagrams, which are concerned with three aspects of the clause: the selection of the process, the selection of participants and the selection of circumstance.

The ninth chapter, 'The grammar of logical meaning: Clause complex' deals with the logico-semantic systems of the clause complex which provides options that can be used to link individual clauses of experiential meaning together into ideationally coherent clause complexes. After defining the clause complex, the chapter reviews two systems of logical relations: taxis, (parataxis and hypotaxis or how two or more adjacent clauses are linked to each other through relations of dependency or interdependency) and logico-semantics (the types of

meanings that allow adjacent clauses to project or expand on each other). The chapter explains the readers how logical systems of the clause complex complement transitivity choices, and that how variations in the amount and types of logical relations realize differences in mode and genre.

The tenth chapter, 'The grammar of textual meaning: Theme' discusses the third level of meaning in the clause i.e. textual meaning. Describing the structural configurations by which the clause is organized as a message the chapter helps the readers to recognize the major system involved, that of Theme with a configuration of the clause into two functional components of a Theme (point of departure from the message) and a Rheme (new information about the point of departure). The chapter then explores how the thematic structures of the clause realize the tripartite semantic structure of language, when we recognize textual, interpersonal and experiential (or topical) thematic elements. The chapter therefore is about the system of theme, "the element which serves as the point of departure of the message" and "that which locates and orients the clause within its context" (Halliday and Mathiesen 2004: 64). Thematic structures in different clause types are presented with examples in this chapter.

The scheme of the eleventh chapter, 'Explaining text: applying SFL (Systemic functional linguistics)' is designed first to summarise the linguistic model presented in the previous chapters and then to demonstrate how a systemic functional approach to language can be applied to text analysis in a comprehensive manner. The demonstration of text analysis offers a comprehensive lexico-grammatical and cohesive analysis of three crying baby texts (in chapter 1). The chapter shows explicit interpretations, how the texts are alike and different and relate those patterns to the cultural and situational contexts of which they are the realization.

According to Dr. Suzanne Eggins, "In the ten years since the first edition, much has happened to systemic linguistics and to me, since 1994, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) has moved from 'marginal' to 'mainstream' as an approach to language, at least in Australia."

As a text book or reference book aiming at introducing the principles and techniques of the systemic functional approach to text analysis, the book impressively interprets Halliday's theory in a reader centered, clear, concise approach. Written for students who may have little or no formal knowledge of linguistics, the book covers most of the major concepts in systemic linguistics (semiotic system, genre, register,

text, cohesion, grammatical metaphor). Taking the third edition of Halliday's *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Grammar* (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004) as a base book, the second edition of Eggin's book appeared with a theoretical modification of chapter four (Discourse semantics: cohesion) of the previous edition after which it has become the main part of chapter two (What is (a) text?) in the new edition resulting in a better focus on important concepts like texture, cohesion, coherence and the relationship among them.

The text book successfully shows that the systemic functional linguistics is one of the most powerful models of grammatical theory that has been constructed "for purposes of text analysis: one that would make it possible to say sensible and useful things about any text, spoken or written in modern English." (Halliday 1994: XV)

*A Revolution: Learn to Learn English* by D. W., Hubei Education Press, 277, Qingnian Road, Wuhan 430015, P. R. China, 2007, 16.00 RMB, ISBN 978-5351-4625-0/G3866

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A Chinese proverb, "It is better to teach fishing skills than to give the fish" tells the true essence of teaching. Of course there are a lot of publications on English teaching pedagogy, however, D. W.'s *A Revolution: Learn to Learn English* is exceptional, which in the author's opinion, may drive some teachers of English out of job, can challenge the traditional English teaching, and can make quacks terror-stricken in China. How to learn English is a question often being asked. Although there are a great many books on the subject, they are often written for language instructors and linguists, i.e., too theoretical, not for the ordinary readers. This is book is reader-oriented and offers some insightful advice to English learners in China, sharing with others D. W.'s successful career of learning English.

As to his pedagogical approach, D. W. is not of a piece with today's Chinese academia. In today's China, the educational system typically directs students to goals that run counter to their own heart-felt interest. Many students study what they don't like in order to get the required documents (though maybe not the practical skills) for a job, and most of them learn the skills for taking exams, not the skills needed in the workaday world. D. W. is acutely aware of the problems of the Chinese educational system, so he emphasizes the individual student's

own desire and motivation and demands that the study of language have some connection with the practical use of language in the real world. His method for learning to read English gives students a preparation for the use of English in their careers and provides the foundation for a genuine enjoyment of the English language throughout their lives, which regard education as a life-long activity, not something that stops upon receiving the diploma.

The introduction of the book, *Why a Revolution?* first explores the English worship in China. It believes that English worship is a grave error because most Chinese are working and living in China and they use Chinese much more than English, which, however, does not mean to resist against English completely for the reason that English is necessary in the certain fields in our era of globalization. Then it discusses the Absurdities in the schools (such as teacher-oriented, lack of teacher-student interaction, and too many examinations) and tricks of English charlatans (they boosts that English tests can be passed within one or months or English can be mastered in two months under their guidance). In fact, making money is the charlatans' major concern. All these make English learners in China slaves of examinations, not the masters of English, so their learning is not a motivated learning but forced learning. The introduction ends with the author's motto of the revolutionary learner: on my own and for my sake, for he believes "God helps those who help themselves."

Chapter 1, 'First step: I decide to have a better life' explores that to those who want to be lucky dogs in the global village linguistic competence makes life more meaningful and English can be an important tool to change one's fate, so the requirements are to try to speak English and to be a person written large. The most impressive part of the chapter is that it offers the English learning ladder, which comprises eight levels: beginner, elementary, lower intermediate, intermediate, upper intermediate, advances, professional and expert. D. W. thinks that different people can master different levels in the light of their needs (It is quite all right for taxi drivers and attendants to get the elementary level.).

The next chapter, 'The revolutionary idea to understand the nature of the English language and speak all the truth about English' offers D. W.'s mottoes on learning English: "Anybody can speak English unless he or she is dumb", "Learn English in months!- Advertising only!", "Classroom learning can easily waste your time", "Input decides output", "What to learn - have your own say", "Make learning a habit", "Have your own way", "A wise person never relies on the teacher",

“More comfort, less hard work”, “Link: how riddles can help you learn English”, “Make an ambitious plan but allow for laziness”, and “Find your comrades”. D. W. thinks that English learners should know the British English vs. American English: differences in pronunciation, in grammar & vocabulary, pay more attention to accents: British, American, Chinese & international, and know the different methods the foreign teachers and Chinese teachers adopt in class, and know the importance of the Internet to the English-learning revolution, have a clear mind of the relationship between tests and their English proficiency. D. W. believes that there are two fallacies about learning English: fallacies about memory and “thinking in English”. His answers to the question “What can I do if I have a poor memory?” are that the ways to memorizing English words are learning them in the meaningful contexts, and that “The more it is used, the better it gets.” There are two min-understandings about “thinking in English” in learning English: The Chinese can also think in English; Thinking in English means “no Chinese.” D. W. believes that “thinking in English” really means to input information in English directly and to output information in English directly, and thinking in English can only limited within certain scope, thus suggesting reading more of the translated versions of the Chinese classics and establishing the Chinese’s thinking in English. Usually Chinese teachers teach English from ABC, but D. W. thinks it is effective to begin with words, phrases and sentences and to learn some Chinese English. As for the teacher’s role, his motto is that “The supreme art of war is to subdue the students to learning without teaching.” The method of English learning is of great importance, and D. W. lists the following methods: reading aloud (suitable for elementary and intermediate levels), reciting (for elementary and intermediate), memorizing vocabulary (for elementary, intermediate and advanced), grammar analysis (for post-elementary and intermediate), reading & observation (intermediate and advanced), interest-guided reading (for all levels), removal of mines (for immediate and advanced), translating & interpreting (for all levels), audio & visual (for all levels, but it is an important way of acquiring knowledge and information especially for advanced), chat (for all levels after intermediate) and multi-dimensional storming (for the levels after the post-elementary).

‘The tactics & weaponry of the revolution’ explores the issues such as speaking, listening, reading, writing, translating, vocabulary, grammar, reading aloud, reciting, memorizing words or even a dictionary, analytical reading, perspective reading, interest-guided reading, mine-clearing, translation, audio-visual, chat, multi-

dimensional storming, the superlative degree: the one-book method, proficiency in English: success of the one-book method, and dictionaries & grammars. All these are very useful to do the revolution. All the tactics listed here promote the revolution: learn to learn English.

'Make your own reasonable plan' comprises two parts: to make sure where you are on the learning ladder, and to make recommended learning plans for learners at different stages, thus making suggestions to the specific group of learners (preschool, pupils, college students, those who have got jobs but desire to learn, self-taught learners, those who want to live abroad, those who want to be postgraduates, those who want to study abroad, and those who is engaged in translation and interpretation.), which means to teach students in accordance with their aptitude.

The last Chapter, 'A life with English, a personal experience' shares D. W.'s successful experience in learn English. D. W. maintains that learning English should start "with a love of the future", that the learners should have an idea, "I am glad of my English but not crazy for it", and keep in mind the purpose of learning, that trying to take part in the translation competition is one of the effective ways of learning English. He also offers us some mottoes such as "English forever", "A little humor makes you less boring", "Felling English by the word", and "Playing with English". D. W.'s experience tells us the nature of learning English at different levels and is feasible and practical to English learners.

The appendices comprises 1) five stories of success in learning English including three Chinese, a Polish and a Japanese, 2) a list of the core English words offered by Neil Gratton based on his statistic data of 67 English novels, 3) Internet resources for English learning, and 4) dictionaries & grammars available, which tell not only the methods of learning English but also how to be a person with English.

The full name of the book's author is Chu Dongwei, who puts D. W., the abbreviations of his given name, on the book cover, which demonstrates his unique character.

All in all, the book under review challenges the traditional and present education systems in China and attaches more importance to English competence rather than the results of English tests, which brings hope to the reform of English education in China.