

International Systemic Functional Linguistics Association
Annual General Meeting
ZOOM 26/07/22

Present: Derek Irwin (chair), Rosemary Huisman, Geoff Williams, Akila Sellami, Yaegan Doran, Shooshi Dreyfus, Mokoto Sasaki, Edward McDonald, Wendy Bowcher, Li Long, Mick O'Donnell, Peng Ying, Emily, Zhang Shujie, Pin Wang, Smiley, Wang Yaqin, Yu Hongjiang, Angel, Charles Guo, Zhao Wenchao, Lingting, Huang Chuxin, Liucy, Tang Ping, Yhy, Meng, Linda Liang, Zhang Hui, Jin Nana, Christian Matthiessen, Jamie Williams, Sheena Gardner, Pauline Jones (minutes)

Apologies: Helen Caple

1. *Minutes of the 2021 AGM:* were passed as an accurate reflection of the meeting
2. *Matters arising:* no immediate matters were raised.
3. *Chair's report:*

It has been an interesting year, with many continued travel issues, though some colleagues have been able to manage to reconnect in person internationally. Obviously, at this congress that has not been the case, but the organizers and the team at Shenzhen University deserve our gratitude for their efforts to ensure that there is an ISFC this year. Their efforts follow on some other great successes in terms of virtual meetings, including but not limited to ESFLA 2022 (fully online), ASFLA 2022 (in hybrid form) and the 2021 SFLIG, the latter of which is running a very popular YouTube and Facebook group, along with a virtual conference last November. There is a central issue with these venues, though, which those of us in China are acutely aware of: access is not always assured depending on which platforms are chosen. However, there is also a great potential to make our work much more widely available, which we will discuss in a moment.

It is of course our hope that we will be able to meet in person again by the time of ISFC 48, which is to be held in Tunisia in March 2023. It is heartening in the meantime to see the discussion taking place on Sysfling and Sysfunc, though as we have seen in the past, the written modality can sometimes be problematic.

ISFLA is pleased to report that we have supported the ASLFA project to digitize the Halliday and Hasan archive project out of our Australia funding. Last year we did flag the issue of income, as we have essentially had none – but also, no expenses – for the last 3 years. China congresses have always been an exception in terms of funding, given the difficulties in moving currency across the border, and the free availability of ISFC has been extremely generous, but we do need to think about our model going forward, which Geoff Williams has raised as a point for discussion. However, we would welcome ideas on how to strike the balance between ensuring we continue to be an open, welcoming community of scholars and considering what kinds of systems of dissemination (and, indeed, socialization) are appropriate to our international organization.

4. *ISFC22 Shenzhen Report* (Alex Peng)

Alex reported approximately 10,000 attendees over different times, with 5000 in just one session but actual f2f congress numbers were fewer. See attached for a comprehensive report on the Congress.

Geoff Williams pointed out that current congress attendance suffers as a result of two issues: (i) strong regional conferences may mean people less inclined to attend international conference, and (ii) the increasing move to online events indicates growing interest in SFL but has implications for sociality. Questions arise about how to both organise regional and international conferences, and how to boost SFL communities across different forms of communication.

Motion moved (DI and YD) that the international committee be tasked with examining the issue and making a proposal re both issues. Suggestions included some kind of digital repository, perhaps regions to act as

hubs for international conferences, linking publications strategies to proposal (CM).

5. *Report on the upcoming congresses:*

- 2023. Tunisia (to be held in March)
- 2024. NSW, Australia.
- 2025. Glasgow, UK (convened by Tom Bartlett)
- 2026. North America.
- 2027. Asia.
- 2028. Latin America.
- 2029. Australia.
- 2030. Europe.

6. *Discussion:*

- In response to the unexpectedly large numbers accessing the annual congress in Shenzhen through online resources and further to earlier discussion (item #4), the ISFLA Committee was asked to consider planning implications for future congresses, and for developing possible other online SFL interactive resources (GW).
- The matter of formal approval of UNSW as host of ISFC 2024 was raised. Minutes of 2019 suggest it was to be formalised. Chair to follow up.
- Issue of executive attendance at ISFC conferences was also discussed (SD). General expectation is that executive members attend where possible (teaching and administration responsibilities permitting).
- Matter of timing of conferences raised once again. General principle is that conferences be held at a time convenient for the host country (WB). Streaming enables individuals to attend but it is a matter of how to structure program so that face to face and virtual participation are managed.
- Alex Peng will stand down as China representative on ISFC executive, and Pin Wang will be his replacement (moved YD & DI). The chair noted Alex's contribution and thanked him accordingly.

7. *Proposals:* None received

8. *ISFLA Treasurers' reports:*

- a. Carlos Gouveia (Europe):
ISFLA (EUROPE) TREASURER'S REPORT 2022
Summary of the ISFLA (Europe) account with the Co-operative Bank
10,088.60 GBP carried forward from last report
11,297.45 EURO
13,219.53 USD
- b. Bernie Mohan (North America): TBC
- c. Yaegan Doran (Australia): Projected Balance as of Aug 1 2022: \$12,277.46 (AUD)

9. *Regional news and welcomes:*

Akila Sellami announced 48th ISFC congress - "SFL: Power and Empowerment"- to be held on March 18-21 with Pre-Congress Institute 16-17th March. <https://www.syflat.tn/isfc2023/>

Planned due date for paper proposals is 19th November 2022. Registration deadline is 6th March, 2023. Conference is planned to be a f2f event but consideration will be given to online participation.

10. *Other business*

Yaegan Doran tabled a thank you note from Helen Caple and the Halliday archives working group to the international committee for \$5,000 funding provided for digitalisation.

The 47th International Systemic Functional Congress, ISFC 47
The 18th China National Conference on Discourse Analysis, CNCDA 18
The 47th International Systemic Functional Pre-Congress Institute, PCI 47
The 21st China Systemics Week, CSW 21

Shenzhen University
July 2022

The 47th International Systemic Functional Congress, ISFC 47, was successfully held online from July 25-27, 2022 after three years of frustrations and difficulties in the decision-making and organisational processes because of the COVID pandemic. The Congress was launched by the International Systemic Functional Linguistics Association (ISFLA) and organised by the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Shenzhen University, coordinated by the international journal, *Language, Context and Text: The Social Semiotics Forum* (LANGCT) and the *Journal of Foreign Languages in China* by the Higher Education Press.

ISFLA's International Committee decided in July 2017 that the Congress was to be held in China during July 12-16, 2020. However, due to the pandemic, it was postponed to July 25-29, 2022, changed from offline to online format and its duration was reduced from five days to three days. Three sessions (morning, afternoon and evening) were arranged each day to cater for time constraints on speakers and attendees from (1) East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Australia, New Zealand, (2) the Middle East and Europe and (3) Americas.

Since the Congress coincided with the 18th China National Conference on Discourse Analysis, they were convened together, consistent with an established tradition. Prior to the Congress, the 47th International Systemic Functional Pre-Congress Institute and the 21st China Systemics Week were held from July 21-23, with six specific programmes running simultaneously.



Convenors: Professor Xuanwei Peng (left) & Professor Geoff Williams (right)

The opening ceremony of the Congress was presided over by **Professor Xuanwei (Alex) Peng**. Delegates were warmly welcomed by the Vice President of Shenzhen University for social science, **ZHANG, Xiaohong** and Professor **HUANG, Guowen** (one of the chairs of the ISFLA Congress Academic Committee, the former chair of the ISFLA Congress Working Committee, the president of the Discourse Analysis Committee and a professor at South China Agricultural University). Two well-known scholars of international systemic functional linguistics, **J.R. Martin**, a fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and professor, University of Sydney, and **Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen** (a chair of the Congress and co-author of the highly influential works, *An introduction to functional grammar* and *Construing experience through meaning* with the SFL founder, Professor Michael Halliday, also presented welcoming comments and ambitions for Congress discussions.

As the responsible senior administrator and supervisor of the development of the Congress since 2019, **Dr Zhang Xiaohong** reported that the number of abstracts received by the Working Committee dropped from more than 900 in 2020 to about 280 in 2022, showing the serious impact of the COVID pandemic on the planned academic exchanges. However, she also commented that the original numbers reflected the global attractiveness of Shenzhen as an important part of China's Greater Bay Area and a pilot area of socialism with Chinese characteristics. She invited SFL scholars to consider joining the Linguistics team at Shenzhen University.



ZHANG, Xiaohong, the Vice President of Shenzhen University

Professor HUANG Guowen pointed out that this Congress was the fourth to be held in China after Peking University (1995), Tsinghua University (2009) and Sun Yat-sen University (2013). Professor HUANG reviewed the development of international SFL over the past half a century, its active promotion in China and the important progress made. He expressed sincere gratitude to all scholars in China and beyond China for their active support and joint effort.



Chair of the Academic Committee HUANG Guowen delivering his welcome speech

The opening ceremony was also privileged to have present Professor DAI Yonghong – the Dean of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Shenzhen University, Associate Professor Derek Irwin – the Chair of ISFLA, and many other widely recognised scholars working in the SFL tradition.

The theme of the Congress was ‘Systemic Functional Linguistics and Praxis: Sustaining dialogue between theory and practice’, including:

1. Developments in SFL Theory and Description
2. Case Studies of Individual Languages
3. Emerging Areas for SFL Transdisciplinary Research
4. Grammatical Metaphor and Discourse Strategies
5. Translation Studies
6. Ecolinguistics
7. Healthcare Communication
8. Clinical Linguistics
9. Language Education
10. Disciplinary English
11. Linguistic Studies of Literary Texts
12. Legal Registers
13. Multimodality/Multisemiosis
14. Corpus Research
15. Comparison of Contemporary Online Texts in Different Languages
16. Advances in Digitally-Based Research Methodologies
17. Semiotics and Applied Linguistics in Theoretical Orientations
18. SFL in relation to Modern Sciences (e.g. Quantum Mechanics, Theories of Complex Systems, Cybernetics, System Theory, Information Theory)

A total of 231 delegates formally registered for the Congress, from China, Japan, Malaysia, Australia, India, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Chile, Mexico, as well as many other countries and regions. After careful review by the Academic Committee, 187 papers were accepted (including six reports of special issues, 154 independent speeches, and 11 keynote speeches).

The Congress was presented online simultaneously, with open access, via the Zoom platform and Chinese Bilibili live broadcast, with more than 10,000 people attending on the three consecutive days. In one plenary alone 4,700 people participated.

Keynote speeches to the Congress reflected current international research being conducted in systemic functional linguistics.

Professor John Bateman (University of Bremen, Germany) presented research on ‘Challenges in Multimodality Research and the Need to Reconnect Theory, Empiricism and Practice’. He characterised some of the challenges raised in ongoing work on multimodality and showed how more robust methodologies are essential for representing and understanding the complexity encountered in multimodal texts. He also demonstrated very impressive new software that his team is developing for this purpose, in a project investigating ‘false information’ texts.



Professor John Bateman

Dr David Butt (Associate Professor Hon., Macquarie University) has been a prolific researcher in SFL theory for many years. The title of his presentation was ‘Semantic Cycles: from Context to Lexicogrammar, and Back Again’. It set out from a holistic perspective on context, semantics and lexicogrammar and illustrated a pragmatic approach to semantics on the basis of “turning language back”. Throughout his report, he presented both important theoretical insights and broad perspectives on systemic functional linguistics.



Associate Professor David Butt

Dr Shoshana Dreyfus (University of Wollongong, Australia) is an expert in developmental linguistics. She presented a report of her research on communicative development of a child with severe intellectual disability (SID). Her aim is to improve the lives of children with SID by using SFL to develop multimodal communication by ‘giving them a voice where their voices are often missing’. Her work included new uses of the ‘teaching-learning cycle’ developed in the *Language and social power* project, led by Professor J.R.Martin. The uses notably included training of support workers in the SID field.



Dr Shoshana Dreyfus

Dr Lise Fontaine (Cardiff University) has been deeply influenced by the British tradition of lexical studies, which assisted her to establish herself as a leading scholar on lexical problems within the field of systemic functional linguistics. Her paper was titled ‘Lexis beyond rank’. Her findings demonstrate that natural meaning at the lexical level can also be abstracted and processed from empirical evidence as much as meanings at group and clause levels.



Dr Lise Fontaine

Professor HE Wei (Beijing Foreign Studies University), has been focusing on ecolinguistics research in recent years. Her report ‘Extension of Systemic Functional Linguistics: Eco-grammar for Ecological Discourse Analysis’ builds an applicable framework for ecolinguistic research from an SFL perspective.



Professor HE Wei

Professor Theo van Leeuwen (University of Southern Denmark & University of New South Wales) is a leading scholar of multimodality in the field of systemic functional linguistics. His presentation was titled ‘The Human Touch: Power and Solidarity in Online Shopping’, and was the first paper in SFL on this important topic, expanding on the widely-respected work of T.F.Mitchell from the 1970s, ‘The language of buying and selling in Cyrenaica’, published in *Principles of Firthian Linguistics* (1975). Professor van Leeuwen explored systematic changes in eBay from its inception to its current, different practices.



Professor Theo van Leeuwen

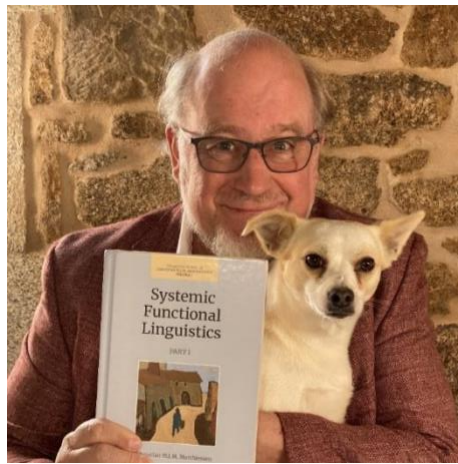
Professor J.R. Martin (University of Sydney) has strongly influenced the work of several generations of Chinese SFL scholars through long-term, extensive exchanges with the Chinese academic community, as well as scholars throughout the rest of the world. His report was titled ‘Construing Entities: Types of Structure’. This paper presented new understanding of group structure informed by work in language typology. He provided important proposals to expand group description in SFL theory.



Professor J.R. Martin

Professor Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen (Distinguished Professor of Linguistics, Hunan University, China and Professor, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain) presented a wide-ranging, visionary paper titled ‘The Language (Registers, Discourses) of Healthcare: Theory and Practice’. He systemically elaborated potential for dialogue between SFL theory and practice, and theory and practice in healthcare communication. He underscored the importance of helical movement in this dialogue between theory and practice, noting

especially that SFL work in healthcare communication provided opportunities for professional empowerment of healthcare workers. His proposal was illustrated through findings from his current research.



Professor Christian Matthiessen

Dr Teresa Oteíza (Pontifical Catholic University, Chile) specialises in social and ideological analysis of discourse, educational linguistics, the discourse of history and systemic functional theory. Her presentation was titled ‘The appraisal system in Spanish: Resources for building graduation’. She argued that meanings of graduation of attitudes in Spanish written language can be realised not only at the rank of the clause, phrase or word but also the rank of the morpheme through suffixation.



Dr Teresa Oteíza

Dr Pin Wang (Shanghai Jiaotong University, China) is an internationally renowned SFL scholar who is familiar with a range of Indo-European, East Asian, South Asian, Sino-Tibetan and other languages. His report, titled ‘Nominal group systems and structures: A systemic typological perspective’, presented an exploration of descriptive challenges faced by SFL as its research expands across a wider range of languages. His proposals were cogently illustrated by examples from Sino-Tibetan languages.



Dr Pin Wang

Professor YANG Yanning (East China Normal University) has attracted wide academic attention through his research into diachronic linguistics and grammatical metaphor. His report was titled ‘The Diachronic Typology of Constructions: A Systemic Functional Framework’. Using two large corpora of Classical Chinese and Old English, he provided synchronic evidence for grammaticalisation from a diachronic perspective.



Professor YANG Yanning

In addition to the Congress plenary papers, the Congress itself was a forum for the discussion of major, complex theoretical and descriptive issues in SFL. International scholars participating in the forum clarified some key concepts and descriptive frameworks, reported new findings on a wide range of research topics and proposed applications of SFL in future research.

The ISFLA Executive Committee convened the association's annual meeting online on the evening of July 26. It announced that ISFC 48 will be held in Tunisia in March 2023.

At the closing ceremony, the two convenors expressed warm thanks to the experts and representatives who participated in and supported the Congress and, especially to all the Congress staff led by Dr Nana Jin. They also promised that, with the permission of speakers, the Congress website www.isfc2022.cn will be linked to the Chinese Baidu's network disk to make downloading videos and return visits possible.

The success of the Congress will enhance exchanges of views in the Asia-Pacific region and well beyond, and will promote the academic growth of young scholars. It will also have a positive impact on SFL research in the Greater Bay Area of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, as well as in East, Southeast and South Asia. At the same time, the online operation of the Congress and various workshops has provided a significant organisational experience which will helpfully inform the nature of future international congresses.

(Contributed by the School of Foreign Languages, Shenzhen University)