

Systemic Functional Linguistics in Translation Studies

Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) has become an important tool in Translation Studies. This research conducts a comprehensive literature review to determine the influence of SFL on Translation Studies (TS) and synthesizes existing research to highlight key findings, trends, and gaps in the literature. **This study conducted a literature review** from 2019 to 2023 concerning the application of SFL in TS. This study applied a systematic literature review method and followed PRISMA to conduct this review. **This study used three databases** like Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Semantic Scholar. This study also employed qualitative synthesis to analyse the contents of the studies in terms of genres and text type, research foci, theory of SFL and TS used in the research, and methodologies. **The study found that authors from China and Indonesia** mostly applied SFL in TS. Concerning text type and research foci, novels and poetry have been the most studied, with emphasis on translation quality, translation techniques, and semantic aspects of translation. The theory of SFL, which is mostly used in translation studies, is the interdependency and logical semantics of complex clauses, transitivity, meta function, modulation, theme, and rheme. In addition, translation theory, which is mostly applied in research, includes translation techniques and translation quality assessment. Qualitative research is widely used to explore various aspects of SFL and Translation Studies. **This study offers an in-depth analysis of SFL in Translation Studies and identify unexplored areas that could be investigated in the future.**

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1. INTRODUCTION

In SFL language is viewed as a resource for creating meaning and conveying speakers' intended messages [1]. The three semantic strands (ideational, textual, and interpersonal) within this framework are designed to transmit messages of communicators in any context [2]. Translation Studies have grown to incorporate insights from linguistics, cultural studies, and communication theories. SFL focuses on the social roles of language makes it particularly suitable for exploring the complex nature of translation [3].

SFL has become an essential tool in translation studies, increasingly recognized as a framework that can enhance both translation methods and theoretical understanding [4]. Research emphasizes that translation

is fundamentally an act of generating meaning, without meaning creation, it cannot be considered translation. Within the SFL framework, speakers select from the full potential for meaning within the language system, and each utterance conveys multiple meanings linked to language functions [5]. However, grammatical tools for expressing these meanings often differ across languages, requiring translators to understand these subtleties to convert a Source Text (ST) into an effective and meaningful Target Text (TT) [6].

From a translation scholarship perspective, scholars grounded in SFL argue that Systemic Functional Translation Studies (SFTS) are currently experiencing a more intense phase [7, 8]. This period encompasses both translator education and the exploration of translation by diverse research groups and centers worldwide. The concept of SFTS is therefore recognized in academic discourse and has been employed in studies such as [9, 10], serving as a framework for analyzing both source texts and their translations. Research emphasizes that translation is not merely about following rules but about understanding language as a living form of communication and a system of social signs [11]. SFL views language as deeply intertwined with culture, where meanings are connected to the cultural contexts from which they arise. Language extends beyond words and grammar; it is inseparable from culture [12–14].

This perspective is especially critical in translation, where translators must convey meanings across different social and cultural contexts, including culturally specific elements that may not have direct equivalents in the target language [15]. By applying SFL, translators can facilitate cross-cultural understanding, promoting inclusivity and accessibility principles aligned with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Moreover, understanding and transmitting cultural knowledge through translation contributes to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by fostering dialogue and mutual understanding across communities [16]. Collaborative translation projects, supported by SFL frameworks, also promote global knowledge sharing, supporting SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) and reinforcing sustainable educational and cultural development [17, 18]. Thus, integrating SFL into translation practices not only enhances linguistic and cultural accuracy but also aligns the discipline with global development priorities, demonstrating how translation can contribute to achieving the SDGs through education, innovation, and intercultural cooperation [19, 20].

This study reviews the literature to identify the impact of SFL on Translation Studies (TS) and synthesizes existing research to highlight the key findings, trends, and gaps in the literature. A similar systematic literature review related to SFL and TS has been conducted previously by [21, 22] to investigate the contributions of SFL to literary text analysis, to generalize the status quo of studies applying appraisal theory in translation from 2011 to 2021 [23, 24] to observe publications on tourism translation and power in the translation field and [2] to study how SFL can be used in certain scenarios when translating text from English to Indonesian and vice versa. Furthermore, this study was conducted to explore the research trend of SFL in translation studies, which is different from the previous systemic literature review [25].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Systemic Functional Linguistics in Translation Studies

SFL has been widely recognized as a robust theoretical framework in translation studies due to its emphasis on meaning-making and functional language use. SFL views language as a social semiotic system, where meaning is constructed through ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions [26, 27]. In translation contexts, this perspective enables researchers to analyze how meaning is transferred from source text to target text across different linguistic and cultural settings.

Previous studies have demonstrated that SFL is particularly effective in examining translation shifts, especially in terms of transitivity, theme and rheme, and modality [28, 29]. These linguistic features play a crucial role in maintaining coherence, interpersonal relationships, and experiential meaning in translated texts. As a result, SFL has become a dominant approach in analyzing translation quality and strategies across various text types.

2.2. Trends of SFL Applications in Translation Research

Recent research trends indicate that the application of SFL in translation studies has expanded significantly across different genres and contexts [30, 31]. Literary texts, particularly novels and poetry, remain the most frequently analyzed due to their complex linguistic and stylistic features. Studies often focus on translation techniques, semantic equivalence, and meaning shifts to evaluate translation quality [32].

In addition to literary works, SFL has also been applied to specialized texts such as scientific articles, religious texts, government documents, and digital content [33]. This diversification reflects the growing rele-

vance of SFL in addressing real-world communication challenges, particularly in multilingual and multicultural contexts. However, the dominance of certain text types suggests an imbalance in research focus, indicating the need for broader exploration in underrepresented domains.

2.3. SFL Theoretical Perspectives in Translation Analysis

Theoretical applications of SFL in translation studies primarily focus on key linguistic systems such as transitivity, metafunctions, modality, and thematic structure. Among these, transitivity has emerged as the most widely used analytical tool, as it allows researchers to examine how actions, processes, and participants are represented in translated texts [7, 34].

Metafunction analysis is also widely employed to evaluate how experiential, interpersonal, and textual meanings are preserved or altered during translation. Additionally, the concepts of theme and rheme contribute to understanding information flow and coherence, while modality analysis helps reveal the degree of certainty, obligation, and subjectivity in translation. These theoretical approaches provide a comprehensive framework for assessing translation quality and identifying shifts in meaning.

2.4. Methodological Approaches in SFL Translation Studies

Methodologically, studies in SFL and translation are predominantly qualitative, focusing on textual and discourse analysis. Researchers often employ case studies, comparative analysis, and content analysis to explore translation phenomena in depth. Qualitative approaches are particularly suitable for examining meaning construction and contextual interpretation in translation.

In recent years, there has been an increasing use of corpus-based and mixed-method approaches. Corpus studies enable large-scale analysis of linguistic patterns, while mixed methods combine qualitative insights with quantitative validation [35]. However, purely quantitative research remains limited, suggesting an opportunity for future studies to adopt more diverse methodological approaches to strengthen empirical findings.

2.5. Digital Transformation in Translation and SFL Relevance

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has significantly transformed translation practices, introducing tools such as machine translation, corpus analysis software, and artificial intelligence. Translation is now widely used in digital platforms, including websites, social media, and global business communication, highlighting the importance of efficient and accurate multilingual communication.

In this context, SFL remains highly relevant as it provides a framework for analyzing how meaning is constructed in digital translation outputs. It helps identify whether machine-generated translations maintain functional meaning, coherence, and cultural context. This is particularly important in the digital economy, where translation plays a critical role in knowledge dissemination and cross-cultural communication.

2.6. Human and Machine Translation from an SFL Perspective

The comparison between human and machine translation has become an important research area, especially with the rise of AI-based translation systems. From an SFL perspective, human translators are generally more capable of preserving interpersonal meaning, cultural nuances, and contextual relevance. In contrast, machine translation systems tend to prioritize grammatical accuracy and efficiency.

Studies suggest that while machine translation has improved significantly, it still faces challenges in capturing deeper functional meanings, such as tone, intention, and discourse structure [36]. This limitation highlights the potential of integrating SFL principles into the development and evaluation of AI-based translation systems to enhance translation quality.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study applied a systematic literature review method and followed PRISMA to conduct this review. Finally, the research analysed the contents of the article and synthesized the findings to determine the contribution of SFL to translation studies, the research trends, and the limitations of previous research.

3.1. Databases and Search Criteria

This study used three databases to guarantee comprehensive coverage and a sufficient number of reviewed studies. The databases used were Scopus, Science Direct, and Semantic Scholar. To identify relevant studies, we conducted keyword searches of publications containing the specified search terms. The chosen

keywords were “Systemic Functional Linguistic” AND “Translation” in three databases over five years (2019 – 2023). Furthermore, the articles had to be written in English, published as journal articles, and not classified as articles in press, the publication is article and the article should not be ‘article in press.’ Moreover, book chapters and conference proceedings were excluded.

3.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for this study were articles which apply SFL in translation studies, journal papers, articles published in English, and articles published between January 2019 and December 2023. The exclusion criteria were as articles that used the literature review method, articles exploring SFL in education, articles discussing linguistics but not relevance to SFL and translation, articles discussing SFL only, articles discussing translation but not applying SFL, and articles studies.

3.3. Screening Result

At first, there were 1496 articles with the keyword “Systemic Functional Linguistics” AND “Translation” in Scopus, Science Direct and Semantic Scholar. The first screening found 220 documents in 2019 – 2023, including journal papers, English language articles, and articles that could be retrieved. After screening the title, abstract, and keywords and reading the article thoroughly, 32 documents were identified as the data. Documents were excluded based on the exclusion criteria. The following Figure 1 is as flowchart of PRISMA.

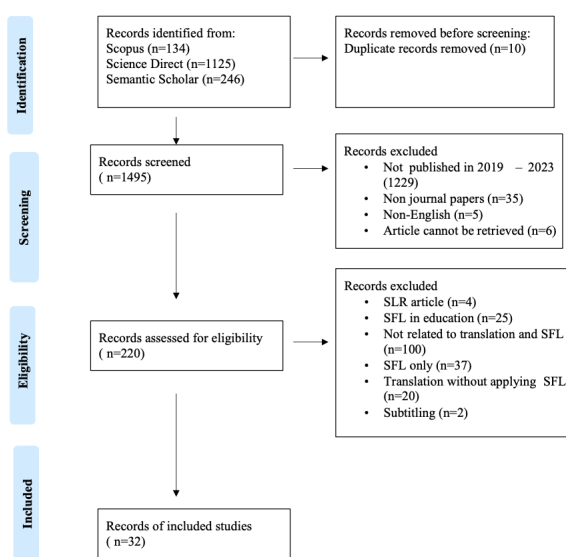


Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart

3.4. Finding and Discussion Authors Country and Research Foci

Overall, a total of 32 studies were identified as applying Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) within the field of translation studies over the five-year period under review, reflecting a consistent and gradually increasing scholarly interest in this approach. Among these years, 2023 recorded the highest number of publications, with nine studies, indicating a peak in research activity and suggesting a growing recognition of SFL as a valuable analytical framework in translation. In contrast, 2020 showed the lowest number of publications, with only three studies, which may be associated with broader disruptions to academic productivity during that time.

In terms of geographical distribution, the majority of the 32 articles were authored by researchers from China and Indonesia, highlighting the significant contribution of these countries to the development of SFL-based translation research. This trend suggests that scholars in these regions are particularly active in exploring the intersection of linguistic theory and translation practices, possibly due to the rich multilingual and multicultural contexts in which they operate.

As illustrated in Figure 2 and Figure 3, the data not only demonstrate the fluctuation in publication output over the years but also reveal the concentration of research contributions by country, providing a clearer understanding of the global landscape of SFL applications in translation studies.

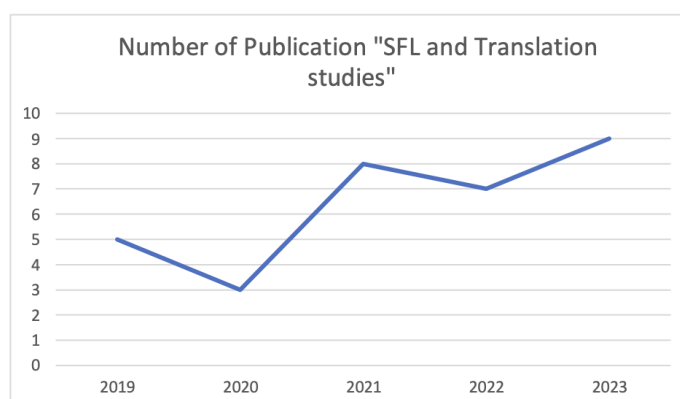


Figure 2. Number of Publication

As shown in Figure 3, the authors from Indonesia and China contributed more to observing SFL and translation throughout the year. Most authors from Indonesia elaborate on ideational metafunction, such as interpersonal metafunction [37]. The ideational metafunction is explained in concerning clause complex translations in a novel. The main goal of their research is to understand how complex sentences from "The Old Man and the Sea" and "Waiting on You" are translated into Indonesian, focusing on how the structure and meaning are kept or altered. Moreover, the research by [38] evaluated how well the translation maintains the original's accuracy, naturalness, and readability. Meanwhile, identified the translation techniques used for translating complex sentences from English to Indonesian, and evaluated the shifts that occur in the translation process to ensure the quality of the translated novel.

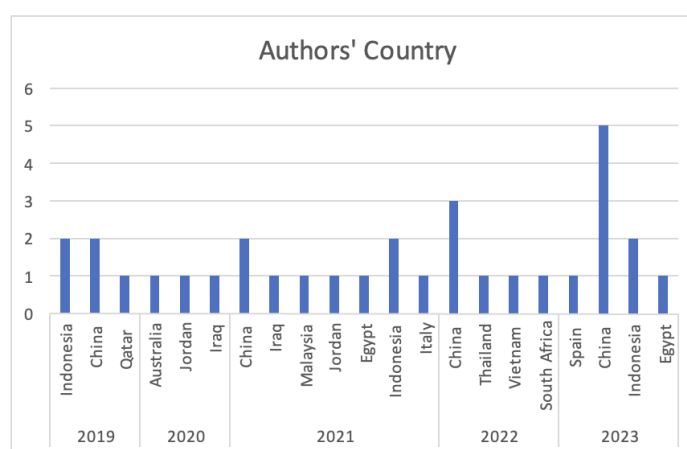


Figure 3. Authors' Country

According to [39] talked about transitivity as one of the ideational metafunction. The main goal of their study was to explore how certain types of sentences, specifically material clauses, from Indonesian meditation texts are changed when translated into English. It aims to understand the linguistic shifts that occur in the translation process, particularly how material clauses in Indonesian are transformed into different types of clauses in English to maintain the original meaning as closely as possible.

This study examines modality metaphors particularly probability and obligation in Anne of Green Gables and their translation into Indonesian, highlighting the techniques used and the translator's creativity. Other studies apply SFL to explore ideology through theme–rheme structures in Qur'an translations [40] and thematic progression patterns in Al-Hikam aphorisms, emphasizing their role in cohesion and meaning [41].

Similarly, research from China shows diverse SFL applications in translation, including dialect translation, transitivity, and verbal art theory, demonstrating how linguistic choices shape meaning, character, and aesthetic value [42–44]. Additional studies highlight the role of translator expertise in expressing epistemic

stance, as well as the simplification of meaning in classical text translation and the influence of translation on national image in political discourse [9, 45].

Table 1. Authors' Country and Research Foci

Country	Research Foci	Number of studies
Indonesia	Clause Complex and translation technique	2
	Transitivity and translation shift	1
	Theme and Rheme and Translators' Ideology	1
	Modality metaphor and translation techniques	1
	Thematic progression pattern and translation shift	1
China	Transitivity in translating literary work	1
	Translation of clause complex	1
	Verbal art in literary translation	1
	Translation of epistemic stance	1
	SFL for translating poem	1
	Thematic structure by machine translation and human translation	1
	Transitivity and translation shifts	1
	Agency and its translation	1
	Contribution of SFL in translation studies	1
	Modality and translation shift	2
instantiation and individuation	1	
Qatar	Concessive conjunction and its translation	1
Australia	Agency and translation shift	1
Jordan	SFL model in translation	1
Iraq	SFL model to improve cognitive performance in translation	1
Malaysia	Genre based method and students' motivation for learning translation	1
Egypt	Interpersonal metafunction and translation quality	1
Italy	Metafunction understanding for translating museum texts	1
Thailand	Transitivity and translation method	1
Vietnam	Modulation system for translating legal text	1
South Africa	SFL to translate jokes	1
Spain	SFL to translate health information website	1

Research by [46] conducted an interview with Professor Guowen Huang concerning the contribution of SFL to translation studies in China. It functions to introduce and discuss the field of Systemic Functional Translation Studies (SFTS) in China, highlighting the contributions of Professor Guowen Huang, who is a pioneering scholar in this area, and to explore the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics to translation studies, including the translation of ancient Chinese poems and the Analects of Confucius, as well as applying Eco linguistics to translation studies. This study suggests future research directions for the application of SFL to translation studies in China, emphasizing the need for interdisciplinary approaches with SFL at their core to address translation issues. Researched a corpus study of modality shifts from Chinese to English translations of research article abstracts. The research found that translating academic texts from Chinese to English resulted in significant changes in the expression of certainty and possibility, making the English versions appear more definite and objective than original Chinese texts. Finally, [47] introduced a three-dimensional model that includes realization, instantiation, and individuation to understand the complex process of translating texts from one language to another [48]. The research found that using Systemic Functional Linguistics helps us understand translation not just as changing words from one language to another but also as a complex process involving the translator's understanding and cultural knowledge. Moreover, the variation in research foci based on the authors' country is shown in Table 1.

3.5. Text Type and Theory

Various text types used for translation studies have applied SFL from 2019 to 2023. The texts included novels, poetry, scientific articles, history and philosophy texts, literary text corpus, autobiography, economic

text, Quran, museum text, websites, articles about Xin Jinping, research article abstracts, corpora of various texts and genres, government documents, aphorism, short stories, and newspapers. Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of the text types used for research.

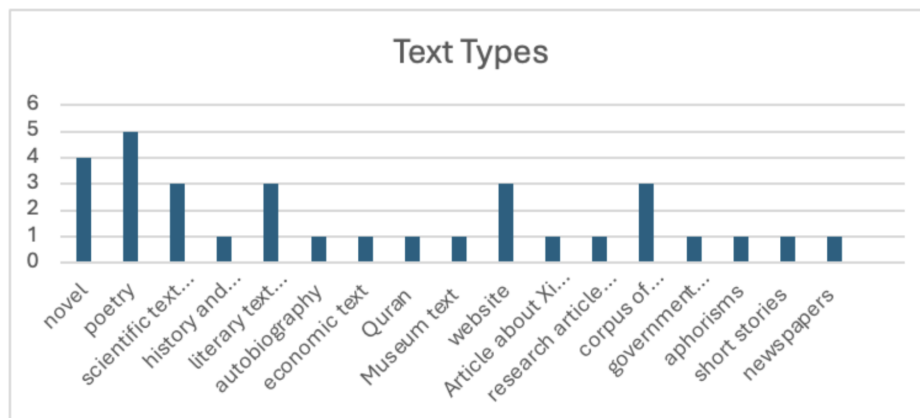


Figure 4. Text Types

Figure 4 shows that literary texts are the most frequently used data source in SFL-based translation research. Five studies applied poetry as the data, four studies used novel, three studies utilized a literary text corpus, and one study used short stories. Therefore, it can be said that the literary genre has been the most common genre for SFL and translation research for over five years.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 emphasizes a rich and diverse research landscape in translation studies with SFL, covering a wide range of text types and genres. Novels and poetry have been the most studied, with emphasis on translation quality, translation techniques, and semantic aspects of translation. There has also been significant interest in specialized texts, such as scientific, religious, and philosophical texts, as well as in practical applications in government documents and websites. This diversity highlights the broad applicability and depth of translation studies across different disciplines and text types.

Table 2. Summary of Text Types, Theories, and Number of Studies

Text Type and Genres	Theory Used	Number of Studies
Novel	Interdependency and logical semantics of complex clause of source text and target text	2
	Translation technique	2
	Translation quality assessment	3
	Translation of dialect	1
	Modality metaphor	1
Poetry	Translation with transitivity perspective	3
	Verbal art	1
	SFL model based on systemic functional linguistics for poetry translation	1
	Translation quality	1
	Semiotic system	1
Scientific Text (Health)	Transitivity	1
	Translation shift	1

	Epistemic stance	1
	Translators' choice in translating clause complex	1
History and philosophy text	Concessive conjunction	1
Literary text corpus	Explication, implicitation, and explicitness in translations	1
	Developed a model to understand translation choices	1
	Cognitive performances in translation	1
	Develop an embedded situational context model	1
	Realization, instantiation, and individuation	1
Autobiography	Agency	1
	Reader's understanding shift in translation	1
Quran	Prohibitive linguistic acts in Arabic poetic lines	1
	Ideational function and indirect meanings of prohibition in Arabic poetry	1
	Translation method	1
	Theme rheme	1
	Ideological tendencies	1
Museum texts	Metafunction	
	Translation quality	
Website	Transitivity	1
	Lexical metaphor	1
	Evaluative Linguistic Framework (ELF), based on SFL	1
	Hedging	1
	Personal markers	1
Article about Xi Jinping	Agency	1
	Image shift	1
Research article abstract	Modality	1
	Evaluative judgment	1
	Modality shift in translation	1
Corpus of various texts and genres	Genre-based approach in translation	1
	Students' motivation in learning translation	1
	Ideational and interpersonal meanings in jokes	1
	Translation strategies	1
	Interpersonal metafunction (mood and modality)	1
	Translation quality	1
Government documents	Possibility, necessity, or obligation	1
	Translation shift	1
	Translators' choices	1

Aphorisms	Thematic structure	1
Short stories	Theme and rheme	1
	Neural machine translation	1
	Human translation	1
Newspaper	Modulation system	1

The theory of SFL, which is mostly used in translation studies, is the interdependency and logical semantics of complex clauses, transitivity, metafunction, modulation, theme, and rheme. In addition, translation theory, which is mostly applied in research, includes translation techniques and translation quality assessment. This can be seen in the Figure 5 diagrams.

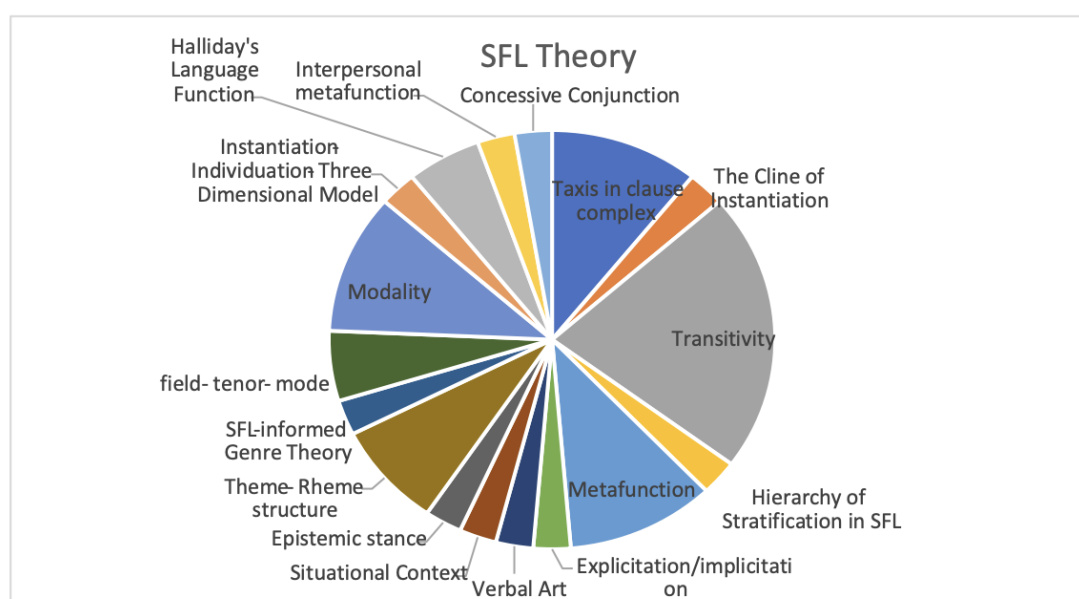


Figure 5. The distribution of SFL Theory in Translation studies

Over the past five years, SFL and translation theories applied to the literary genre have primarily focused on translation quality assessment, interdependency and logical semantics in clause complexes, and translation techniques in novel translation. Other aspects, such as dialect translation, semiotic systems, and modality metaphors, have also been explored, broadening the scope of interest in novel translation studies. As previously mentioned, [37] and [38] emphasized the interdependency and logico-semantics of clause complexes and analyzed the translation techniques employed. Their research also discussed the impact of translation techniques on the overall quality of novel translations [49].

Research on novel translation also examines the translation of literary dialects, as studied by [50]. According to [51] analyzed how types of modality metaphor, specifically probability and obligation, are conveyed in novels and how they can be accurately translated into other languages using various translation strategies. According to [52] investigated how literary texts utilize language to create artistic effect by activating both a basic semiotic system and a more complex verbal art system. This approach was applied to evaluate the translation of Ezra Pound's *The River Merchant's Wife a Letter*, focusing on how the translation captured both the literal meaning and the deeper artistic aspects of the original poem.

Some researchers have also developed models to support literary translation. Research by [53] successfully created an embedded model that enhances translators' cognitive performance by integrating situational context, significantly improving participants' self-confidence and cognitive skills. Meanwhile, [54] found that linguistic models are useful in assessing poetry translation.

Based on Figure 5, the theory of theme and rheme is widely applied in translation studies, particularly in literary texts and comparative analyses between human and neural machine translation. This approach emphasizes thematic structure and progression to ensure coherence and readability. It is also relevant in the translation of the Qur'an and aphorisms, where translators' ideological backgrounds significantly influence meaning construction. Variations in belief systems shape the selection of textual, interpersonal, and ideational themes, ultimately affecting interpretation. Similarly, studies on Al-Hikam aphorisms reveal that maintaining unmarked topical themes supports coherent information flow, highlighting the importance of careful theme–rheme mapping in preserving textual integrity.

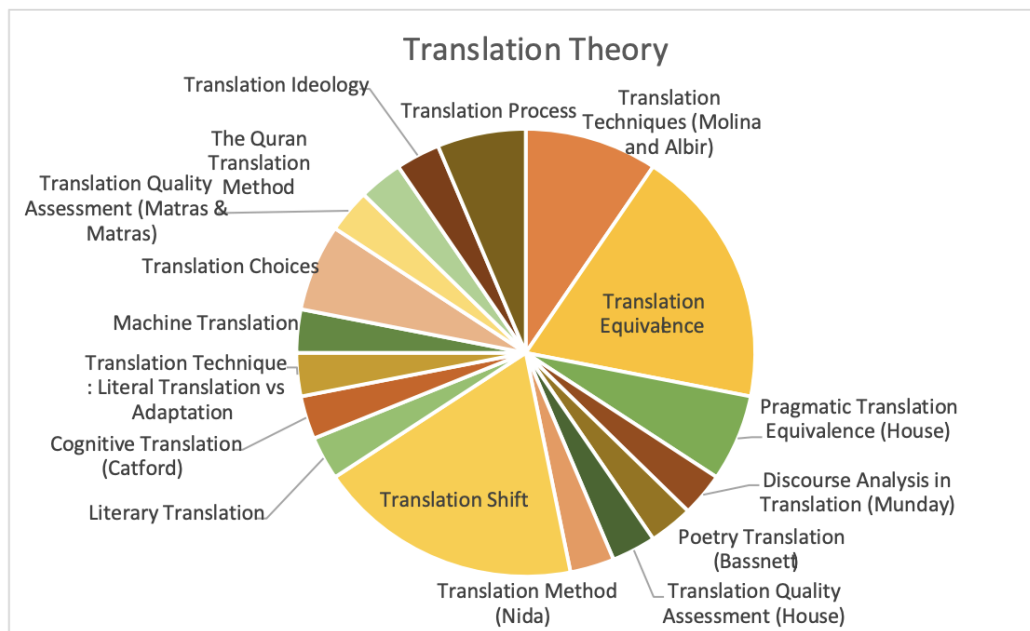


Figure 6. The distribution of Translation Theorie

The theory of transitivity and its related concept of agency have also been extensively utilized across various translation contexts, including poetry, scientific texts, political discourse, and religious texts. These approaches demonstrate how linguistic choices influence character representation, emotional expression, and narrative interpretation. For example, shifts in transitivity can reconstruct character images or adjust lexicogrammatical patterns to convey meaning more effectively. In political texts, the application of agency reveals how translations may alter perceptions of authority and influence, as seen in portrayals of figures like Xi Jinping. Additionally, modulation theory highlights how translators adjust modality such as probability and obligation often softening or strengthening statements, which impacts the objectivity and tone of translated texts across domains such as research articles, government documents, and media discourse.

Beyond these, SFL has been applied through various perspectives, including modality metaphors, genre theory, situational context, and metafunction analysis. Studies on literary works such as *Anne of Green Gables* show how translators employ diverse strategies to preserve meaning, tone, and character expression. Meanwhile, situational and cognitive approaches demonstrate that integrating SFL concepts can enhance translators' performance and confidence. Genre-based methods have also proven effective in improving students' motivation in translation learning. Furthermore, the application of field, tenor, mode, and metafunctions highlights the importance of context, social interaction, and textual organization in achieving effective translation.

Figure 7 illustrates the distribution of additional theories applied within Systemic Functional Translation Studies (SFTS), demonstrating the interdisciplinary nature of recent research. As shown in Figure 7, several supporting theories such as speech act theory, lexical metaphor, motivational design for learning, the Evaluative Linguistic Framework (ELF), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), ecolinguistics, and Skopos theory are frequently integrated to enrich data analysis and provide broader interpretative perspectives. These theories complement SFL by enabling researchers to explore aspects such as meaning negotiation, ideology, evaluation, learning motivation, and translation purpose, thereby enhancing the depth and scope of translation studies.

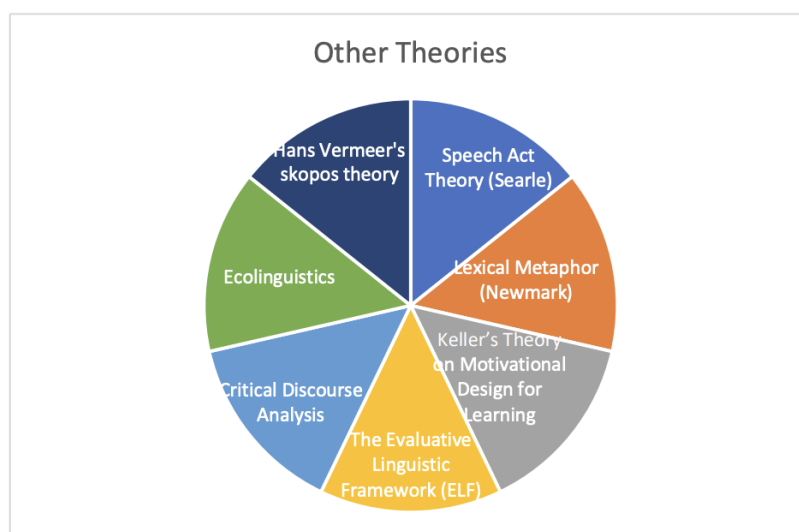


Figure 7. The distribution of Other Theories Applied in SFTS

Furthermore, highlights clear research trends over the past five years. It indicates that transitivity remains the most dominant SFL component applied in translation research, reflecting its strong relevance in analyzing processes, participants, and meaning representation across texts. In parallel, the most prominent trends in translation theory are translation equivalence and translation shift, which are commonly used to examine how meaning is preserved or altered during the translation process. Overall, the distribution presented in Figure 7 underscores the growing integration of multiple theoretical frameworks, confirming that contemporary SFTS research increasingly adopts a multidimensional approach to achieve more comprehensive and nuanced analyses.

4.1. Distribution Methodology

Researchers have applied various methodologies in Systemic Functional Translation Studies during the last five years (2019 – 2023). The distribution of the methodology is presented in the Figure 8.

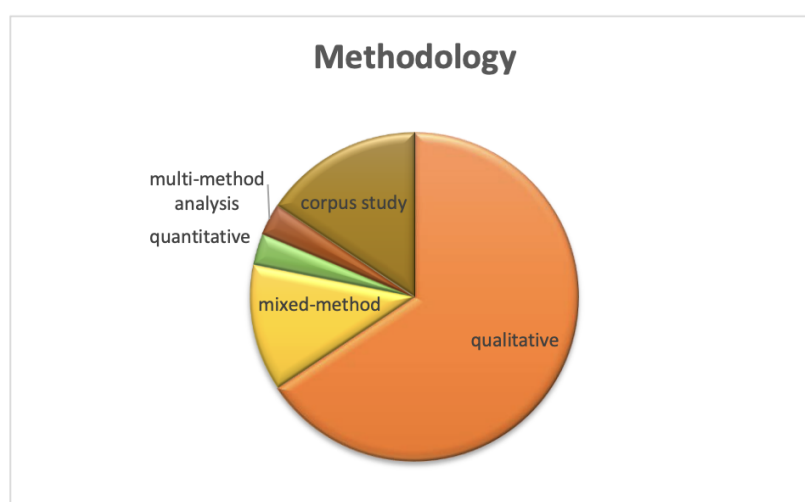


Figure 8. The distribution of different methodologies

Based on Figure 8 and data obtained from SCOPUS, ScienceDirect, and Semantic Scholar, qualitative research is the most widely used method in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Translation Studies. Common approaches include case studies, descriptive studies, exploratory research, comparative analysis, and

content analysis. These studies mainly focus on literary translation, meaning shifts, translation techniques, and cultural contexts in translated texts. Several studies also applied corpus-based methods using parallel corpora and tools such as UAM CorpusTool and AntConc to analyze agency, modality, and translation patterns in Chinese and English texts. Other corpus studies explored modal expressions, translated white papers, and online joke collections. Mixed-method research has also been widely used by combining qualitative techniques, such as think-aloud protocols and interviews, with quantitative analysis to evaluate translation cognition, transitivity patterns, and conjunction use in translated texts. These studies generally found that integrated learning and translation models improved translation quality, cognitive performance, and participants confidence. In contrast, quantitative research remains limited. One quasi-experimental study examined the effectiveness of genre-based teaching using SFL in improving students' motivation to learn translation and showed positive results in higher education contexts.

5. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

This study offers several important managerial implications for stakeholders involved in translation practices, education, and digital language services. The findings demonstrate that SFL provides a structured and meaning-oriented framework that can significantly enhance translation quality. Translation agencies and professional translators are therefore encouraged to adopt SFL-based analysis such as transitivity, metafunction, and thematic structure into their workflows to ensure that both linguistic accuracy and contextual meaning are effectively maintained. In the context of translation education, academic institutions and training providers are advised to integrate SFL as a core component of their curricula. The dominance of qualitative and literary-focused studies indicates the need to strengthen students' analytical capabilities in meaning construction rather than relying solely on linguistic equivalence. Embedding SFL approaches in teaching practices can improve students' critical thinking, cognitive performance, and overall translation competence, particularly when dealing with complex and culturally sensitive texts.

From an organizational perspective, particularly within the digital economy, the application of SFL can support more effective multilingual communication. Companies, content creators, and public institutions that operate across digital platforms should consider implementing SFL-informed evaluation frameworks to ensure clarity, coherence, and cultural appropriateness in translated content. This is especially relevant for high-impact domains such as legal, healthcare, and public information services. Furthermore, the findings highlight that machine translation systems still face limitations in capturing interpersonal meaning and cultural nuances. This suggests that technology developers and AI practitioners need to incorporate SFL principles into the design and evaluation of translation systems. Such integration can enhance the ability of machine translation tools to produce outputs that are not only grammatically accurate but also contextually meaningful and functionally appropriate.

Finally, the uneven distribution of research focus identified in this study indicates significant opportunities for innovation. Managers and researchers are encouraged to explore underrepresented areas, including interpersonal and textual metafunctions, quantitative methodologies, and non-literary domains. Expanding research and practical applications in these areas can contribute to the development of more adaptive, efficient, and context-aware translation models and services.

6. CONCLUSION

In short, this study offers a systematic review of the application of SFL in translation studies, or it can be called Systemic Functional Translation Studies (SFTS) from 2019 to 2023. The search for studies involved three databases: Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Semantic Scholar. The selection of the included studies was guided by PRISMA. Of the 32 articles included after screening, the year 2023 saw the most publications with a total of nine, while 2020 had the fewest at just three. Among the 32 articles, authors from China and Indonesia were the most represented. The authors from Indonesia mostly discuss clause complex and translation techniques, transitivity and translation shift, theme and rheme and translators' ideology, modality metaphor and translation techniques, and thematic progression patterns and translation shifts. Meanwhile, the authors from China wrote about transitivity in translating literary work, translation of clause complex, verbal art in literary translation, translation of epistemic stance, SFL for translating poems, thematic structure by machine translation and human translation, transitivity and translation shifts, agency and its translation, contribution of SFL in translation studies, modality and translation shift, and instantiation and individuation. The trends of the

studies are summarized as follows.


First, various text types used for translation studies have applied SFL from 2019 to 2023. The texts included novels, poetry, scientific articles, history and philosophy texts, literary text corpus, autobiography, economic text, Quran, museum text, websites, articles about Xin Jinping, research article abstracts, corpora of various texts and genres, government documents, aphorism, short stories, and newspapers. Literary texts are most widely used in translation research, and poems are dominant. Second, research has focused heavily on novels and poetry, looking at the quality of translations, the methods used, and the meanings conveyed. There has also been a lot of attention paid to specialized texts such as scientific, religious, and philosophical works, along with how translation is applied in official documents and on government websites. The most utilized SFL theories include the interdependence and logical semantics of complex clauses, transitivity, metafunctions, modulation, as well as theme and rheme. In addition, the most commonly applied translation theories in research revolve around techniques for translation and assessing the quality of translations. The dominant theory leads to a gap in future research. Interpersonal metafunction, textual metafunction, three-dimensional models, and verbal art seem to be less represented, indicating potential areas for further exploration. Third, most studies apply qualitative research and corpus study; therefore, only a few studies use mixed and quantitative methods. The limitations of this methodology also provide suggestions for future studies. Future research may apply a mixed or quantitative method to explore the application of SFL in Translation Studies.


7. DECLARATIONS

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7.2. Author Contributions

Conceptualization: AW, WG, SW, HP and FR; Methodology: AW, WG and SW; Software: AW, and FR; Formal Analysis: AW, WG, SW and FR; Investigation: AW, WG and HP; Resources: WG, SW, and HP; Data Curation: FR, SW and HP; Writing Original Draft Preparation: SW and HP; Writing Review and Editing: WG, SW, and HP; Visualization: AW, FR, and SW; All authors, AW, WG, SW, HP and FR have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

7.3. Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest, known competing financial interests, or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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