

Systemic Functional Grammar Fostering Critical Thinking in Teaching and Learning Language

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Abstract

The crucial role of language in man's life in this era of globalization, multiculturalism, knowledge explosion, or modern technology prodded several professionals, academicians, and graduate-school students to conduct research studies on language teaching and learning, specifically, on language theories and pedagogical practices related to communicative approach and functional grammar. (Freeman and Anderson, 2011) One modern grammar theory this study assumed as the theoretical underpinning of any language teaching and learning methodology that zeroes in on critical thinking, a higher-order thinking strategy that every nation in this contemporary world needs to progress economically and politically, is the *SFG* or *Systemic Functional Grammar*.

To discover the relationship between SFG and critical thinking, this paper used the research method, *Description through Analysis*, in surveying existing reading materials such as books, studies, and journals dealing with the ins and outs of SFG and critical thinking. The results showed that the ideas behind the Systemic Functional Grammar were likewise the ones applied in language teaching and learning activities infusing critical thinking. The SFG concepts: 1) multi-functionality of clauses, 2) grammar structures linked with communicative functions, 3) interactive activities 4) contextualized exercises, 5) stressed macro-function of language 6) exercises giving wide latitude of choice and 7) use of discourse as the dominant language structure (Bloor, 1995, Eggins, 1994, Halliday, 1994) would trigger off critical-thinking acts like: comparing, classifying, patterning, forecasting, planning, critiquing, hypothesizing, and reasoning inductively or deductively.

Critical thinking greatly depends on the learners' schemata; meaning their previous, prior, stock, or background knowledge of their world. Requiring students to judge or evaluate people, places, events, and things in their environment based on their own knowledge and experiences, critical thinking is by nature a top-level thinking act that is directed, controlled, corrected, or checked by whatever concepts, views, and understanding the learners have about themselves, of others, and of the whole world. (Paul and Elder, 2008). Banking on what have been stocked in their minds, critical thinkers determine or assess the value, worth, validity, adequacy, desirability, acceptability or appropriateness of everything they encounter in their environment. All of these thinking acts involve SFG's concepts of free choosing of what to express where, when, or how to express such thing to another party. Needing a great deal of self-knowledge, alternative thinking, worldviews, and opinions and using longer forms of utterances labelled rhetoric or discourse by SFG proponents, this kind of higher-order thinking strategy capitalizes much on critical thinkers' linguistic and communicative competence in expressing their honest, truthful, or genuine ideas to support their beliefs, claims, and arguments about their individually determined worldviews.

In conclusion, SFG is the language theory to underlie any language teaching and learning method or technique to develop students' competence in using the language to foster or promote critical thinking. Validating the impact of the SFG theory on the core components, requisites of, or approaches to critical thinking is the contribution of this paper to the field of language teaching and learning.