

An Assessment of Students' Ability in Disambiguating Grammatical Structures Using Systemic Functional Approach

Jay Mark B. Santos

La Consolacion University, Philippines

santosjmark145@gmail.com

Albyra Bianca R. Sy Tamco

La Consolacion University, Philippines

abbsytamco@yahoo.com

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 29/03/2020

Accepted: 29/04/2020

KEYWORDS

Grammatical Structures, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Systemic Functional Approach, Notional-Functional Syllabus

Abstract

The main objective of this study is to assess the students' ability in disambiguating grammatical structures using Systemic Functional Approach. This study made use of descriptive correlational method of research that utilized a standardized questionnaire as a primary data gathering tool. The respondents of the study were the Education and Communication Arts students from La Consolacion University Philippines. The results were analyzed and interpreted using statistical tests such as frequency, mean, and percentage computation in determining to assess the students' ability in disambiguating grammatical structures using Systemic Functional Approach. Using the aforementioned procedures, the findings of the study shown that the respondents' average scores were below the 50% level, it suggests how wanting their level of performance was. lastly, it is suggested that the notional-functional aspects be incorporated in the language syllabus through the use of functional categories. There are clear benefits associated with the notional-functional syllabus coupled with a communicative teaching approach. A number of implications were drawn based on the findings of the study.

1. INTRODUCTION

The changing nature of the communicative landscape is accentuating the need to broaden our definition of language pedagogy. Language teaching as it affects the process of learning should focus on how to mean in the language, with language acting as the resource for meaning-making. Students must be given opportunities to create meaning in order to use the language. Thus, research and practice concerned with language teaching and learning must be engaged with the nature of language itself quite centrally – and with the characteristics of the languages relevant to learners (Matthiessen, 2015). One promising way to study the relevance of language in a communicative setting is through Systemic Functional Grammar (henceforth, SFG) since it deals with a comprehensive system of language, it is thus necessary to research language teaching and learning based on SFG, which is a theory about language itself.

The study is anchored on M.A.K Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics which deals with describing and modeling language as a resource for making-meaning and a system of choices.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a theory of language that is strongly oriented on the description of how language makes meaning in context (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). SFL interprets language as the meaning potential where all strata of the linguistic system contribute to the making of meaning; the semantic system semanticizes contextual meaning by providing resources to enact and construe it as linguistic meaning; the lexicogrammatical system grammaticalizes this meaning by providing resources to create meaning in wording, and the phonological system realizes meaning by sounding the wordings that realize the meaning. This functional orientation—i.e., the orientation to meaning—means that the grammatical analysis of texts in SF terms is not simply a formalized description of the syntax of individual sentences divorced from their co-text (the surrounding language) and context (the relevant extralinguistic activity), but a description of how particular grammatical units are functioning (i.e., making meaning) within particular clauses, within a particular text, and within a particular socio-cultural situation. Thus from an SFL perspective, the study of grammar cannot be carried out independently of the study of meaning, and the interpretation of the meanings construed by the grammar in a particular text is itself informed by the situation and culture in which these meanings were produced, as semantics is “the interface” between grammar and context (Cayron, 2009).

Systemic Functional Grammar is a theory of grammar within the broad tradition of functional approaches to language. According to this theory, language is seen as a meaning potential, and grammar is modeled as a resource for making meaning through wording rather than as a set of rules. A major characteristic of the systemic theory is its comprehensiveness – i.e. the concern with language in its entirety, “whatever is said about one aspect is to be understood with reference to the total picture”, and “what is being said about anyone aspect also contributes to the total picture” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This approach supports active learning of language as it gives opportunities for students to use language in a real-life situation. It views language in terms of the communicative functions that allow the realization of the meaning potentials of language. It deals with what should be learned in terms of how things are done with words: stating, promising, declaring, asserting, questioning, asking, requesting, and commenting (Cunanan, 2010). In other words, SFG approach adopts a genre-based orientation towards multimodality and is organized around the metafunctional meanings, that is the experiential meanings (happenings through processes, participants, and circumstances), interpersonal meanings (engagement and expression of a modality), and textual meaning (organization of parts).

Many aspiring language teachers still find linguistics as one of the most formidable disciplines. Such condition is brought about by the scarcity of instructional materials and a limited number of well-trained teachers who can handle one of its allied fields, especially Systemic Functional Grammar. If this problem remains unattended, producing ill-equipped language teachers shall most likely become a vicious cycle (Cunanan, 2010).

Despite the fact that SFG approach may lead to language learning success (Cunanan, 2010, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, Matthiessen, 2015), criticism on the use of the aforementioned approach has arisen. According to Prior (2015) the approach could be overgeneralized by not being sufficiently contextually nuanced and that it seems not to address the hybridized nature of contemporary communication. This was supported by Rata & Samfira (2015) which states that this approach makes students unsure about how much self-directed learning and what information is relevant and useful for retention. This can show that the declarative knowledge about grammar that students and teachers need to handle can be taught and learned following different conceptions of language pedagogy.

The current study adopts a functional perspective on grammar based on the work of linguist Michael Halliday. Given the above-mentioned issues and problems, this study

assessed the students' ability in disambiguating grammatical structures using Systemic Functional Approach.

The result of the study may lead to the formulation of Structure-Based and Notional-Functional ESL Syllabus. This syllabus is based on the SFG approach and under the communicative approach that assigns grammatical structures secondary to language notions. It also stresses a means of organizing a language syllabus, with emphasis on breaking down the global concept of language into units of analysis in terms of communicative situations in which they are used (Brown, 2000). In addition, this approach aims to hone students' higher-order thinking strategies (HOTS), such as interpreting, criticizing, synthesizing, and creating as students go through the stages of learning. Taken in sum, understanding and teaching these practices can help students become better communicators and language users.

1.1. Research Objective

This research assignment aims to assess the students' ability in disambiguating grammatical structures using Systemic Functional Approach.

1.2. Research Questions

Given these contexts, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How may the ability of the respondents in disambiguating grammatical structures be described in terms of:
 - 1.1. verb category;
 - 1.2. verb structure;
 - 1.3. noun modification;
 - 1.4. intensifier;
 - 1.5. sentence coherence;
 - 1.6. transitivity;
 - 1.7. voice of the verb;
 - 1.8. sentence focus;
 - 1.9. tense-aspect relationship; and
 - 1.10. transitivity
2. How may the scores of the respondents be compared in relation to their curricular groups?
3. What syllabus may be designed to assist students in disambiguating ambiguous selected grammatical structures?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

The descriptive method of research was utilized in the study to assess the students' ability in disambiguating grammatical structures using Systemic Functional Approach as implication in the formulation of Structure-Based and Notional-Functional ESL Syllabus.

2.2. Participants

Ninety (90) students participated in the study. The respondents were taking Bachelor in Secondary Education at La Consolacion University Philippines. The respondents were grouped according to their curriculum levels: first year and second year during the first semester of the school year 2019-2020.

2.3. Instrument

This study adopted the locally constructed instrument by Cunanan (2010). It consists of three parts. Part I (completion-type, five items) consists of verb category (items 1, 2, & 3), intensifier (item 4), and sentence coherence (item 5). Part II (multiple-choice type of test, nine items) includes transitivity (items 6 & 8), verb category (items 7 & 14), verb structure (items 9 & 13), voice of verb (item 10), noun modification (item 11), and sentence focus (item 12). Part III (modified multiple choice type of test, six items) covers voice (item 15), tense-aspect (items 16, 17, & 18), verb category (item 19), and transitivity (item 20). According to Cunanan (2010), the items were chosen based on the most frequent lapses in the quizzes and occasional essays of the respondents. As cited by Cunanan (2010), the items included in the instrument were taken from examples found in the works of Halliday (1978), Trask (1993), Lyons (2001), Kroeger (2004), Nida and Taber (1969), and Elson and Pickett (1964).

2.4. Data Collection and Analysis

The data collected was tabulated and processed using Microsoft Excel. The assessment of students' ability in disambiguating grammatical structures using Systemic Functional Approach was assessed using frequency, mean and percentage computation.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. How may the ability of the respondents in disambiguating grammatical structures be described?

Grammar has also been central to language teaching and assessment. Though communication is emphasized, effective communication cannot be carried out without grammatical competence (Savage, Bitterlin, & Price, 2010). Grammar is noteworthy as the means, which glued together the various language structures that are used for communication (Mohamed, Ismail, & Eng, 2010).

Table 1: Respondents' Score in Grammar Test

		Preferred Answer	Respondents Group			% of the Correct Responses
			G1 (45)	G2 (45)	Total of the Correct Responses	
Verb Category	1. The baby _____ because he/she has got a bad cold. a. coughs b. is coughing	is coughing	21	31	52	57.78
	2. Our cousins are more fortunate than _____ because their parents are very successful in doing business. a. we b. us	us	45	44	89	98.89

An Assessment of Students' Ability in Disambiguating Grammatical Structures Using Systemic Functional Approach

	3. The incident _____ before anyone knew what was happening. a. occurred b. was occurred	occurred	34	38	72	80.00
	7. Which question probes the sentence <i>The gift pleases her?</i> a. Does the gift please her? b. Does she like the gift? c. Is she pleased by the gift?	Does she like the gift?	28	24	52	57.78
	14. That the books were quickly disposed was true because... a. the books sold quickly. b. they sold the books quickly. c. the books were sold quickly.	...the books sold quickly	11	5	16	17.78
	19. My uncle is doing business. <i>Business</i> is the direct object of <i>is doing</i> .	No	3	1	4	4.44
	<i>My uncle</i> is a doer or actor in the sentence.	No	8	1	9	10
Verb Structure	9. My friend and I used to write each other. In the sentence, the verb is... a. used b. write	write	37	39	76	84.44
	13. We're late. Let's go to the gym. I think the program.... a. has started. b. has been started.	has started	31	40	71	78.89
Noun Modification	11. The sentence reads: Paul wrote an angry letter. The adjective angry describes... a. Paul b. letter c. Paul and letter	Paul	12	8	20	22.22
Intensifier	4. The professor is _____ good that he can easily explain the lesson even if it seems _____ difficult. a. so...too b. so...so c. too...so d. too...too	so...too	27	30	57	63.33
Sentence Coherence	5. Complete the short dialog. Man: Will you marry me? Woman: Yes, I _____. a. do b. will c. am	will	24	28	52	57.78
Transitivity	6. Which of the two sentences means <i>The dean signed the documents?</i> a. The dean had the documents signed. b. The documents had been signed by the dean.	The documents had been signed by the dean.	41	39	80	88.89
	8. Which of the two sentences makes sense? a. I sent a letter to Baguio. b. I sent Baguio a letter.	I sent a letter to Baguio.	41	43	84	93.33
Voice of Verb	10. Compare the two sentences. Mary was born in Manila. The glass is broken. Which of the sentences is in the passive	The first sentence	25	17	42	46.67

	voice? a. the first sentence b. the second sentence c. both the first and second sentences d. neither of the two sentences					
	15. My spirit is dampened. The verb is in the passive voice.	No	7	7	14	15.56
Sentence Focus	12. If you know that John ran away, and somebody asks you, "Who ran away"? Your answer will be... a. He did. b. John did. c. He ran away.	John did.	40	43	83	92.22
Tense-aspect	16. Will you please hand me that book. The word <i>will</i> shows the tense of the verb.	No	5	2	7	7.78
	In the sentence, the event or action happens at the time of speaking.	Yes	20	33	53	58.89
	17. I have to go now. The sentence contains an infinitive.	No	8	13	21	23.33
	The sentence shows ownership.	No	12	12	24	26.67
	The main verb is <i>go</i> .	Yes	37	36	73	81.11
	The main verb is <i>have</i> .	No	18	23	41	45.56
	18. The visitors are about to leave. <i>Are</i> is a linking verb.	No	2	4	6	6.67
	The main verb is <i>leave</i> .	Yes	38	41	79	87.78
	<i>To leave</i> constitutes an infinitive.	No	9	2	11	12.22
Transitivity	20. I'll cross the bridge when I get there. In the sentence, <i>the bridge</i> will receive the verb <i>will cross</i> .	No	10	6	16	17.78
	<i>The bridge</i> is affected by the verb <i>will cross</i> .	No	3	7	10	11.11
	The sentence can be changed into passive form like <i>The bridge will be crossed by me</i> .	No	1	2	3	3.33
	The sentence means <i>I will walk across the bridge</i> .	Yes	41	39	80	88.89
X=			20.05	20.71	40.76	
%=			44.56%	46.02%	45.29%	

Table 1 shows the results of the respondents' answers in the test, the aim of which was to assess the students' ability in disambiguating grammatical structures. The test is divided into different parts: verb category, verb structure, noun modification, intensifier, sentence coherence, transitivity, voice of verb, sentence focus, tense-aspect relationship, and transitivity. As can be gleaned from the analysis of data in Table 1, only 40.76 respondents got the correct responses and that is 45.29% of the total respondents. According to Cunanan (2010), if the overall average scores were below the 50% level, it suggests how wanting their level of performance was.

As can be observed from Table 1, responses under the verb category (Pronoun Reference), transitivity (Variable of Causation), and Sentence Focus (Reference) got the highest scores of 98.89%, 93.33%, 92.22%. While responses under Transitivity (passive

Voice), Verb Tenses (Present-Progressive), and Verb Category (Direct Object) got the lowest scores of 3.33%, 4.44%, 6.67%.

Verb Category: Pronoun Reference (Item 2)

In item Verb Category item number two, Our cousins are more fortunate than _____ because their parents are very successful in doing business, 45 out of 45 participants in Group 1 and 44 out of 45 participants in Group 2 favored the second option us over we, even though traditional books taught otherwise. Traditional Grammar discourages the use of sentences such as It is me because the verbs be, according to traditional grammar books, should be followed by pronouns in the nominative case (Cunanan, 2010). However, this is opposed to Halliday's idea that It is I is simply a "bad grammar" because it is not used by native English speakers.

As in the example above, the speaker has to determine how to refer to the person they want to say something about. What we are interested in is analyzing language and this is always language as text, the output of the language system (e.g. language that has been spoken or written). In systemic functional grammar, relational processes can be classified into two types: Attributive and Identifying. The given example is under identifying since "one entity is used to identify another".

Transitivity: Variable of Causation (Item 8)

As cited by Cunanan (2010), Trask (1993) defines transitivity as a condition denoting a verb or a clause containing such a verb that subcategorizes for a direct object that is either a goal or a patient. In item number 8, the respondents were asked which of the two sentences made sense: I sent a letter to Baguio and I sent Baguio a letter. The majority of the respondents chose the first sentence, with 41 out of 45 in Group 1 and 43 out of 45 in Group 2.

The design of nuclear transitivity in grammar is based on the interaction of two simultaneous systems: a system of PROCESS TYPE, and a system of AGENCY. The former accounts for the semantics of the process of the clause, while the latter has been traditionally considered to be concerned with the variable of "causation", for example, with whether the process is caused by an external agent or not. In the second sentence, Baguio functions as an agent, while on the first sentence, Baguio functions as a locative (goal) and not as an agent.

Sentence Focus: Reference (Item 12)

Matters of topicality and focality are handled in systemic functional grammar through the assignment of pragmatic functions during the build-up of the underlying clause structure, as opposed to semantic functions such as Agent, Goal, or the syntactic functions Subject and Object. To test the respondents' ability in identifying sentence focus, they were given item number 12, John ran away. Who ran away, to which majority of them answered John did. Very few of the respondents answered He did or He ran away.

The focal information in linguistic expression is that information which is relatively the most important or salient in the given communicative setting, and considered by the speaker to be most essential for the addressee. In order for this to be a reasonable thing for the speaker, the addressee must already know who John is (i.e. the referent must be identifiable). The new information conveyed by the utterance is the fact that this 'he' was in fact John, and John is thus the focus of the sentence.

Transitivity: Passive Voice (Item 20)

The result in item number 20 shows how the respondents analyzed transitivity in a sentence. When asked if the sentence I'll cross the bridge when I get there could be changed into passive form, The bridge will be crossed by me, most of the respondents agreed. Only 3 respondents out of 90 answered that the sentence cannot be changed into the passive form. This shows that the majority of the two groups interpreted the sentence according to its syntactic structures only.

Verb Tenses: Present-Progressive (Item 18)

As cited by Cunanan (2010), Trask (1993) defines tense as —a grammatical category that correlates most directly with distinctions with time. Aspect is not always easy to distinguish from tense. Aspect shows a contrast in the meaning of the following: —action at a point in time, over a period of time, complete or incomplete, one time or repeated, begun or finished, etc. (Elson & Pickett, 1964). In item number 18, the given sentence was The visitors are about to leave. The majority of the respondents thought that the word “are” is a linking verb. Only 2 out of 45 in Group 1 and 4 out of 45 in Group 2 respondents answered that it is not a linking verb.

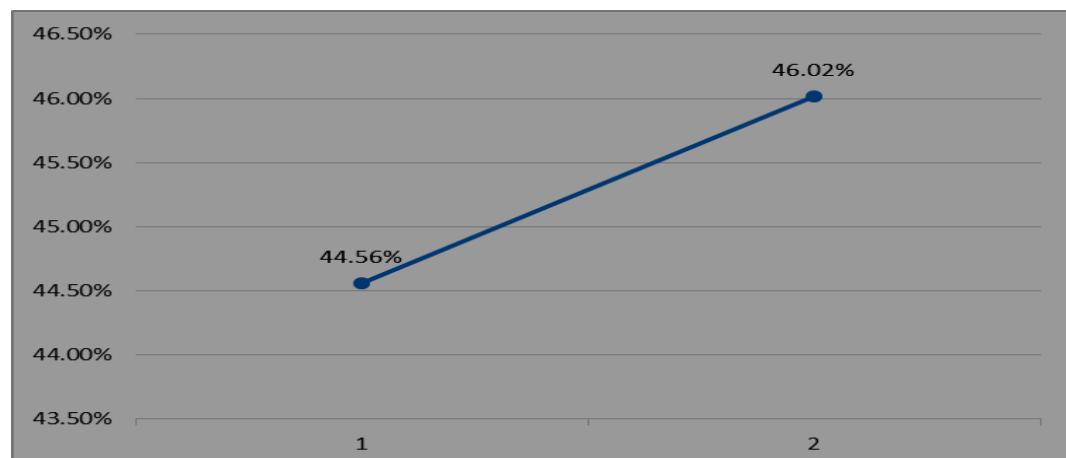
In Systemic Functional Grammar, Halliday uses this term (finite) to refer to the first auxiliary in the verb phrase, the part of the verb that carries tense. The relational process is the type of sentence, which contains subject complement that is preceded by copula or linking verbs. In the sentence, the word ‘are’ does not assign a quality to something or identify something.

Verb Category: Direct Object (Item 19)

In item number 19 under the verb category, the given sentence was My uncle is doing business. The subject is not an actor; instead, it is identified by giving one of its attributes. Only 3 out of 45 respondents in Group 1 and 1 out of 45 in Group 2 think that business is not the direct object of is doing. This shows that most of the respondents disambiguate sentence structures primarily on the structure level.

3.2. How may the scores of the respondents be compared in relation to their curricular groups?

Figure 1: Comparison of Percentage of the Respondents' Score in Disambiguating the Different Grammar Structures



The summary of the scores in Fig. 1 suggests that the respondents' abilities to disambiguate grammatical structures do not differ much according to their curriculum level (First Year and Second Year). However, the second group got a higher percentage than the first group. This maybe because the second group is given more opportunities to use and practice the language in authentic teaching-learning situations.

While the summary of scores does not represent the overall English proficiency of the respondents, these data can be used in comparing the abilities of the respondents as regards their ambivalence in disambiguating grammatical structures. The overall scores show that the lower and the upper groups did not differ at all. Overall, the mean scores of respondents were below 50%.

3.3. What syllabus may be designed to assist students in disambiguating ambiguous selected grammatical structures?

In this sense, one could say that language is primarily functional. In other words, for any language context (conversation, written language, political speech, etc.) language is being used to do a job for the user. This is not to say that the form or structure of language is not important – it is. In many cases, it is impossible to separate function and structure. For this, the researchers suggest the use of Structure-Based and Notional-Functional ESL Syllabus.

In light of the findings, it is suggested that the notional-functional aspect be incorporated in the language syllabus through the use of functional categories suggested by Raine (2010).

Table 2: Activities to be Integrated in Functional-Notional Syllabus as Suggested by Raine (2010)

Language Functions	Activities to be Integrated
1. Imparting and seeking factual information	1.1 reporting (describing and narrating); 1.2 correcting; 1.3 asking; 1.4 answering questions
2 Expressing and finding out attitudes	2.1 expressing agreement with a statement; 2.2 expressing disagreement with a statement; 2.3 enquiring about agreement and disagreement; 2.4 denying statements; 2.5 stating whether one knows or does not know a person, thing or fact; 2.6 enquiring whether someone knows or does not know a person, thing or fact; 2.7 stating whether one remembers or has forgotten a person, thing or fact or action; 2.8 enquiring whether someone remembers a person, thing or fact or action; 2.9 expressing degrees of probability; 2.10 enquiring as to degrees of probability; 2.11 expressing or denying necessity (including logical deduction); 2.12 enquiring as to necessity (including logical deduction); 2.13 expressing degrees of certainty; 2.14 enquiring about degrees of certainty; 2.15 expressing obligation; 2.16 enquiring about obligation; 2.17 expressing ability/inability to do something; 2.18 enquiring about ability/inability to do something; 2.19 expressing that something is or is not permitted, or permissible; 2.20 enquiring whether something is or is not permitted, or permissible; 2.21 granting permission; 2.22 withholding permission; 2.23 expressing wants/desires; 2.24 enquiring about wants/desires; 2.25 expressing intentions; 2.26 enquiring about intentions; 2.27 expressing preference ; 2.28 inquiring about preference; 2.29 expressing pleasure, happiness; 2.30 expressing displeasure, unhappiness; 2.31 enquiring

	about pleasure/displeasure/happiness/unhappiness; 2.32 expressing liking; 2.33 expressing dislike; 2.34 enquiring about likes and dislikes; 2.35 expressing satisfaction; 2.36 expressing dissatisfaction; 2.37 enquiring about satisfaction/dissatisfaction; 2.38 expressing interest; 2.39 expressing lack of interest; 2.40 enquiring about interest or lack of interest; 2.41 expressing surprise; 2.42 expressing lack of surprise; 2.43 enquiring about surprise; 2.44 expressing hope; 2.45 expressing disappointment; 2.46 expressing fear; 2.47 giving reassurance; 2.48 enquiring about fear/worries; 2.49 expressing gratitude; 2.50 reacting to an expression of gratitude; 2.51 offering an apology; 2.52 accepting an apology; 2.53 expressing moral obligation; 2.54 expressing approval; 2.55 expressing disapproval; 2.56 enquiring about approval/disapproval; 2.57 expressing regret/sympathy
3 Deciding on courses of action	3.1 suggesting a course of action; 3.2 agreeing to a course of action; 3.3 requesting someone to do something; 3.4 advising someone to do something; 3.5 warning others to do something or refrain from something; 3.6 encouraging someone to do something; 3.7 instructing or directing someone to do something; 3.8 requesting assistance; 3.9 offering assistance; 3.10 inviting someone something ; 3.11 accepting an offer invitation; 3.12 declining an offer or invitation; 3.13 enquiring whether an offer or invitation is accepted or declined; 3.14 asking someone for something
4 Socialising	4.1 attracting attention; 4.2 greeting people; 4.3 when meeting a friend or acquaintance; 4.4 replying to a greeting from a friend or acquaintance; 4.5 addressing a friend or acquaintance; 4.6 addressing a stranger; 4.7 addressing a customer or a member of the general public; 4.8 introducing someone to someone else; 4.9 being introduced someone, or when someone is being introduced to you; 4.10 congratulating someone; 4.11 proposing a toast; 4.12 taking leave
5 Structuring discourse	5.1 opening; 5.2 hesitating; 5.3 correcting oneself; 5.4 introducing a theme; 5.5 expressing an opinion; 5.6 enumerating; 5.7 exemplifying; 5.8 emphasising; 5.9 summarising; 5.10 changing the theme; 5.11 asking someone to change the theme; 5.12 asking someone's opinion; 5.13 showing that one is following a person's discourse; 5.14 interrupting; 5.15 asking someone to be silent; 5.16 giving the floor over; 5.17 indicating a wish to continue; 5.18 encouraging someone to continue; 5.19 indicating that one is coming to an end; 5.20 closing; 5.21 telephone opening ; 5.22 asking for [someone]; 5.23 asking someone to wait; 5.24 asking whether you are heard and understood; 5.25 giving signals that you are hearing and understanding; 5.26 announcing new call; 5.27 opening [letter]; 5.28 closing [letter]
6 Communication repair	6.1 signalling non-understanding; 6.2 asking for repetition of a sentence; 6.3 asking for repetition of a word or phrase; 6.4 asking for confirmation of text; 6.5 asking for confirmation or understanding; 6.6 asking for clarification; 6.7 asking someone to spell something; 6.8 asking for something to be written down; 6.9 expressing ignorance of a word or expression; 6.10 appealing for assistance; 6.11 asking someone to speak more slowly; 6.12 paraphrasing; 6.13 repeating what one has said; 6.14 asking if you have been understood; 6.15 spelling out a word or expression; 6.16 supplying a word or expression

There are clear benefits associated with the notional-functional syllabus combined with a communicative teaching approach. This approach will be utilized in a wide range of teaching situations.

As according to Cunanan (2010), grammar teaching should be implicit and incidental, that is, inputting of the desired formal structures shall be made only as the needs arise. With this approach, the context of culture and the context of the situation shall be considered along with the authentic needs of the learners. Hence, the learning process becomes realistic, relevant, and meaningful.

4. CONCLUSION

In the light of the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The respondents' average scores were below the 50% level, it suggests how wanting their level of performance was. This shows that most of the respondents disambiguate sentence structures primarily on the structure level and they do not mostly apply Systemic Functional Approach.
2. The ability of the students in disambiguating grammar will be enhanced if they would be given more opportunities to use and practice the language in authentic teaching-learning situations.
3. It is suggested that the notional-functional aspect be incorporated in the language syllabus through the use of functional categories. There are clear benefits associated with the notional-functional syllabus coupled with a communicative teaching approach.
4. The findings drew several implications that may help learners and teachers realize the need for a comprehensive awareness of the systemic functional approach in language pedagogy.

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are hereby offered:

1. The application and use of the systemic functional approach in Language classes should be given emphasis since it is the function of language that is most important to people using the language.
2. Students should be given more opportunities to use and practice the language in authentic teaching-learning situations.
3. Activities on imparting and seeking factual information, expressing and finding out attitudes, deciding on courses of action, socialising, structuring discourse, communication repair will be integrated with lessons in ESL.
4. That the learners be aware of the existing methods, techniques, practices in language education, and language policy to meet excellently learning objectives.

REFERENCES

Brown, H. (2000). Principles of language learning and language. London: Longman

Cayron, A. (2009). Systemic Functional Grammar and the Study of Meaning. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299616095>

Cunanan, B. (2010). Item Learning and System Learning: Contextualizing the Blend of a Structure-based and Notional Functional ESL Syllabus. *Philippine ESL Journal, Vol. 5*

Elson, B. & Pickett, V. (1964). An introduction to morphology and syntax. Sta Ana, California: Summer Institute of Linguistics

Elson, B., & Pickett, V. (1964). An introduction to morphology and syntax. California: Summer Institute of Linguistics

Halliday, M. A., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). Halliday's introduction to functional grammar, (4th ed). London/New York: Routledge

Halliday, M.A.K. (1978). Language as social semiotic. London: Edward Arnold

Kroeger, P. (2004). Analyzing syntax: a lexical-functional approach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Lyons, J. (2001). Introduction to theoretical linguistics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Matthiessen, C. M. (2015). Halliday on language. In J. J. Webster, (Ed.), The Bloomsbury Companion to M. A. K. Halliday. London/New York: Bloomsbury

Mohamed, A., Ismail, S., & Eng , L. (2010). Now everyone can measure grammar ability through the use of grammar assessment system. *International Journal of Teaching and Education Vol. II (No. 3)*

Nida, E. & Taber, C. A. (1969). The theory and practice of translation. Leiden: The Netherlands

Prior, P. (2015). Moving multimodality beyond the binaries: A response to Gunther Kress' 'gains and losses'. Computers and Composition

Raine, P. (2010). A DISCUSSION OF THE NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL SYLLABUS. Retrieved from <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/cels/essays/syllabusandmaterials/rainenotfunc.pdf>

Samfira, E. M., & Rata, G. (2015). Assessing education needs at tertiary level: The focus group method. *Scientific Papers Animal Science and Biotechnologies, 48(2)*, 223-226.

Savage, K., Bitterlin, G., & Price, D. (2010). Grammar Matters: Teaching Grammar in Adult ESL Programs. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press

Trask, R. (1993). *A dictionary of grammatical terms in linguistics*. London: Routledge

Author Biodata

Jay Mark B. Santos is a college instructor at La Consolacion University Philippines where he teaches English and Filipino subjects. He obtained his Master of Arts in Education major in English from La Consolacion University Philippines where he currently pursues his Ph. D. in English Language and Literature. Mr. Santos is currently working on a series of publications and conference presentations addressing Systemic Functional Linguistics, Corpus Analysis, and Constructivism.

Albyra Bianca R. Sy Tamco is a college instructor at La Consolacion University Philippines where she teaches liberal arts education. She has certificates in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages and Teaching English to Young Learners. She obtained her MA in Education major in English from La Consolacion University Philippines where she currently pursues her Ph. D. in English Language and Literature.
