

How does Systemic Functional Linguistics differ from Traditional and Transformational Grammar?

ไวยากรณ์เชิงระบบและหน้าที่แตกต่างจากไวยากรณ์ดั้งเดิมและไวยากรณ์ปริวรรตอย่างไร?

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Abstract

The paper aims to differentiate three types of grammar under prescriptive grammar and descriptive grammar. Traditional grammar is based on prescriptive grammar which states only rules for what is considered the most correct usage whereas transformational grammar and systemic functional grammar share the same view of descriptive grammar that is how language is actually used. Nevertheless, both systemic grammar and transformational grammar are entirely different in terms of meaning. The former focuses on logical meanings or social contexts while the latter focuses only on grammatical analysis. Consequently in a language classroom, these three categories of grammar should be intertwined, not only to focus on forms, but on functions as well.

Keywords : prescriptive grammar, descriptive grammar, traditional grammar, transformational grammar, systematic functional grammar

บทคัดย่อ

เอกสารฉบับนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่ออธิบายถึงความแตกต่างของไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษจำนวนสามชนิดที่อยู่ภายใต้ประเภทของไวยากรณ์ ประกอบด้วยไวยากรณ์บัญญัติและไวยากรณ์พรรณนา โดยไวยากรณ์ดั้งเดิมนั้นยึดแนวทางของไวยากรณ์บัญญัติ ซึ่งยึดกฎเกณฑ์ทางภาษาเป็นหลัก และที่สำคัญต้องมีความถูกต้องที่สุด ส่วนไวยากรณ์ปริวรรตและไวยากรณ์เชิงระบบและหน้าที่นั้นอยู่ภายใต้ไวยากรณ์พรรณนา โดยไวยากรณ์ทั้งสองชนิดนี้ยึดภาษาที่ใช้จริง ทั้งการพูดและการเขียนโดยไม่ว่ากำหนดว่าจะเขียนหรือพูดอย่างไร ทั้งนี้ไวยากรณ์ทั้งสองชนิดก็มีความแตกต่างกัน เพราะไวยากรณ์เชิงระบบและหน้าที่นั้นให้ความสำคัญกับความหมายและบริบทในการใช้ภาษา ส่วนไวยากรณ์ปริวรรตนั้นอธิบายความสัมพันธ์ของโครงสร้างในประโยคที่พบหรือเข้า

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เชื่อว่าใช้ได้ภาษา ดังนั้นการสอนภาษา สามารถใช้ไวยากรณ์ทั้งสามชนิดนี้ประสานกันได้ ไม่ควรยึดแต่โครงสร้างของภาษาแต่ต้องให้ความสำคัญในด้านการนำภาษาไปใช้ด้วย

คำสำคัญ: ไวยากรณ์บัญญัติ ไวยากรณ์พรรณนา ไวยากรณ์ดั้งเดิม ไวยากรณ์ปริวรรต ไวยากรณ์เชิงระบบและหน้าที่

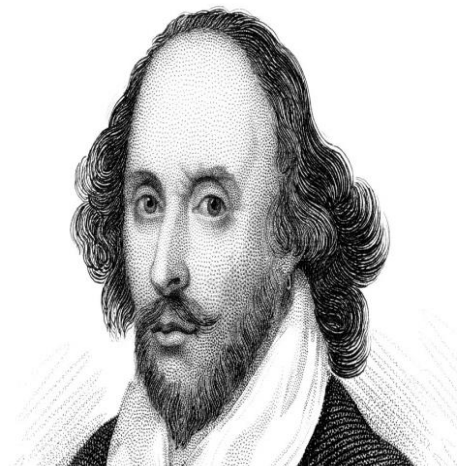
English language teaching has been conducted in Thailand for more than three centuries since the spread of the European colonial period in Asia. The first English textbook, consisting of elementary lessons, the first workbook, and the first dictionaries (both English - Thai and Thai - English) was published during the reign of King Rama IV. Later, in 1891, the Ministry of Education was founded and the English standard was added in the curriculum and examinations believing that knowledge of English can help Thai students to learn about modern technologies which helped develop the country. At that time, traditional language teaching namely, grammar translation method, Was employed, mainly focusing on reading and writing and memorization particularly considered to be a valued teaching tool, especially in societies where oral traditions were strong. In 1970, John B. Carroll, an educational linguist delivered a speech on tests of English as a foreign language in Bangkok. After that, teaching and learning English in Thailand has been scrutinized and established that an essence of learners' individualness, aptitudes, interests and learner's motivation played a vital role in language teaching, not only learners' intelligence. Since then, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been initiated into Thai classroom settings. However, for almost 40 years it seems that the goal of CLT has not yet been reached whereas it has more often found complaints by those top groups of our country managements or by various entrepreneurships that college or university students were unable to communicate in English effectively or fluently though a basic course of English for Communication is compulsorily taught for the tertiary level. One factor affected to meet the need of CLT found is that a teacher is likely to design a test based on the concept of grammatical competence which involves in learning a language that students can master the rules



Teaching English today

of sentence formation in a language and still not be very successful at being able to use the language for meaningful communication. In this paper, I would like to discuss the difference between three types of grammar, based on prescriptive grammar and descriptive grammar, that is systemic functional linguistics differs from traditional, and transformational grammar. As grammar is both a theory of language and a way of describing a language, two kinds of grammatical theory to determine the features of language are stated. The prescriptive grammar is to provide rules for what is considered the best or most correct usage on the basis of a standard form of language while the descriptive grammar will describe how people actually use the language, in both standard and non-standard form.

To begin with traditional grammar, this kind is usually based on earlier grammar of Latin and Greek, and applied to some other languages, such as the English language. This kind of grammar will prescribe rules regarding the proper use of English, illustrating them with correct and incorrect examples drawn from standard authors, such as Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Addison and Pope (Diane D. Bornstein 1977 p.8). Traditional grammar will describe parts of words, parts of speech and parts of sentences, but not deal with aspects of writing and the meanings or semantics. Traditional grammar aims to describe parts of words with regard to learners able to constitute the correct sentence, which is developed from a clause while a clause is developed from a phrase, a phrase is developed from words, and words are initially developed from morphemes the smallest unit. Besides, traditional grammar will divide the words into various categories called "parts of speech" or parsing which involves examining and identifying major elements, such as **Nouns, Verbs Pronouns, Adjectives Adverbs, Prepositions, Conjunctions, and Articles.** Students just learn the rules of grammar and can only name of parts of speech, whilst they are able to decide what category words belong to, and which part of speech it is. Additionally, for parts of sentences, traditional grammar divides the sentence into various



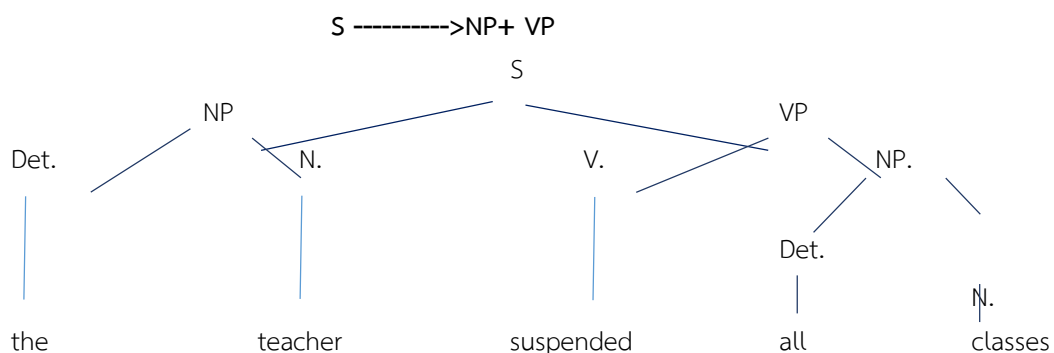
Shakespeare



Noam Chomsky

sections and provides names for them, which is called analysis. Examples of these are **Subject and Predicate, Phrases (types of phrase), and Clauses (types of clause)**. Furthermore, diagrams are used to indicate sentence structure as well. This procedure was worked out by Alonzo Reed and Brainerd Kellogg in *Work on English Grammar and Composition* (1877), called *Higher Lessons in English*. They broke up word order so as to show the relationship between principle and subordinate parts. Nevertheless, traditional grammar has two main weaknesses. Firstly, the rules it describes are based on the language of a very small group of middle-class English speakers. Therefore, it is not universal or might be used to discriminate against the language of working class, immigrant and aboriginal students. Secondly, the rules do not deal with aspects of writing, and cannot make sure that written communication will be effective since there is nothing about purpose or intended audiences for writing (Gerot and Wignell, 1994). Similar to traditional grammar, transformational grammar is concerned with describing the structure of individual sentences. This grammar views the language as a set of rules which allow or disallow certain sentence structure. It was first proposed by the American linguist Chomsky in 1957. He believed that native speakers have their internalized grammar of language or language competency. Knowledge of grammar rules is seen as being carried around inside the mind. This means a person's ability to create and understand sentences they have never heard before and can produce sentences indefinitely and automatically. He demonstrated a phrase structure of grammar in order to show a system of rules and has changed his theory over the years. However, the most well-known version was published in his book *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* in 1965. It is referred to as the *Aspects of Model or Standard Theory*. This model comprises four main parts; the base component, transformational component, the phonological component and the semantic component. To show a phrase structure of grammar, the sentence considers the basis of the syntactic system which begins with directions

for producing structural descriptions of sentences, called phrase structure rules. Each rule provides a symbol representing a constituent of a sentence to the left of an arrow and a series of symbols to the right which is expanded at a time, for instance $S \longrightarrow NP + VP$. The symbol "S" stands for sentence and is expanded as an "NP" (Noun phrase and a "VP" (Verb phrase). The sentence in transformational grammar is the basic unit syntactic analysis. The first sentence rule breaks up into its principle constituents and orders the constituents in relation to each other, such as



The subject and predicate are defined relationally, that is in terms of their position, rather than in terms of the meaning. He continued explaining that there were many different types of transformational processes which operate a string of words and symbols with particular constituent structure and convert them into a new string with a new derived constituent structure. They are *the passive transformation, the negative transformation, interrogative transformation, the emphatic transformation, the imperative transformation, and affix hopping*. His most well-known theory is concerned with the relationship of four components as the following. Firstly, the Base Component produces basic syntactic structure. It consists of phrase structure rules which are mentioned above. A level of sentence in this stage is called **Deep Structure** as it is much more abstract and is considered to be in the speaker's, writer's, listener's or reader's mind. Secondly, the Phonological Component changes or transforms those basic structures into

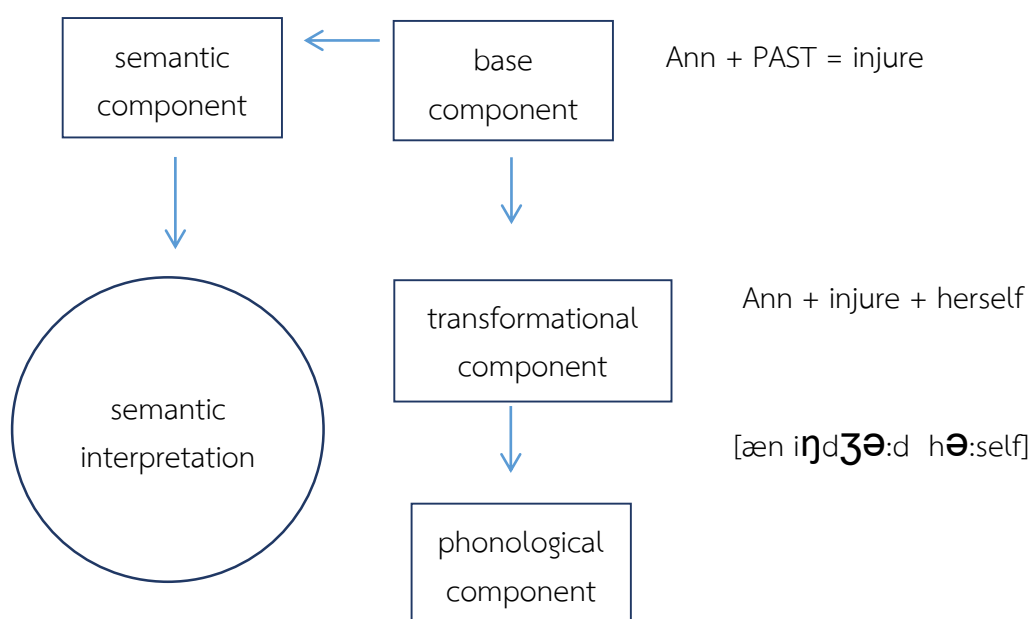


Semantic grid

Firstly, the Base Component produces basic syntactic structure. It consists of phrase structure rules which are mentioned above. A level of sentence in this stage is called **Deep Structure** as it is much more abstract and is considered to be in the speaker's, writer's, listener's or reader's mind. Secondly, the Phonological Component changes or transforms those basic structures into

sentences, called **Surface Structure**. Transformational component in this stage contains transformational rules which change a basic syntactic structure (base component) into a sentence like structure. In other words, the Surface Structure is the syntactic structure of the sentence which a person speaks, hears, reads, or writes. Thirdly, *the Phonological Component* gives sentences a phonetic representation so that they can be pronounced. This part is also needed to supply the rules for pronouncing a sentence or phonetic interpretation. Lastly, the Semantic Component deals with the meaning of sentences. This component contains rules which interpret the meaning of sentences. The model of the four components to one another can be seen in the simplified diagram below:

Example



(Richards. et al. 1992 p. 387)

In contrast, systemic functional linguistics is an approach developed by Michael Halliday which sees the language in a social context. His theory behind this approach is functional rather than formal, that is it considers language as a resource used for communication and not as a set of rules. This on **Texts grammar** attempts to describe the language in actual use and focuses on their context. The term of **Text** refers to a complete linguistic interaction spoken or written, preferably from beginning to end. Systemic grammar looks instead at **Text** because the purpose and structure of communication behavior cannot be



Google classroom

described by only looking at single

sentences. One important thing about the nature of text is that, when we write it down it looks as if it is confused of words and sentences they are exactly made of meaning. The meaning or a semantic unit, of course,

has to be expressed in words and structures. For the context of situation or social situation, Halliday illustrated meanings can be

exchanged and analyzed in terms of three headings of discourse: **field, tenor and mode**. Firstly, *the Field of Discourse* refers to what is happening to the social action that is happening. What situations are the participants engaged in and which language figures as some essential component? Secondly, *the Tenor of Discourse* refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles. What kinds of role relationship obtain among the participants, including permanent and temporally relationships of one kind or another and what types of speech role they are talking in the dialogue? Lastly, *the mode of to what Discourse* refers to what part the language is playing and what it is the participants are expecting the language to do for them in that situation. What channels of communication are used, written or spoken, face to face, telephone, smart phone chat programs, e-mail, Line, Facebook, Instagram, Blog, Google classroom and the like? An example of a text from a foreign language lesson in a language classroom is that *Field*: language study, a defined area of information about the foreign language, for instance the use of tense. Students are able to acquire knowledge about tense and their use.



Michael Halliday

Tenor: the teacher and students are the participants. Their roles are defined by educational institution. The teacher is in higher role than those students. The temporary role relationships between them depend on personality. *Mode* is the language used for instruction and discussion. Channel of the text can be both spoken and written. They might be questions, eliciting information, answers, acted dialogues by students, and written for example visual presentation on blackboard, textbooks, additional reading by the teacher (Richards, et al, 1992 p. 338). It can be seen that systemic linguistics shows particular interest in the sociological aspects of language and it views language as a form of doing rather than as a form of knowing which has developed a model of language suited to its overall view of language.

To sum up, traditional and transformation grammar are similar in some ways whilst systemic linguistics is absolutely different, and the major differences in perspective between the above three grammar types can be broadly summarized as the following. First of all traditional grammar is based on prescriptive grammar which states only rules for what is considered the best or most correct usage whereas transformational grammar and systemic functional grammar share the same view of descriptive grammar, that is it describes how

language is actually used, but systemic linguists focuses on texts and their contexts and the actual use of written and spoken. Moreover, both systemic grammar and transformational grammar are completely different in terms of the meaning. Systemic grammar does not draw any distinction of principle between the meaning potential and the use of the



potential in a given context. It does not interpret meaning potential to assume some sort of deep structure. In contrast, it represents the addresser's selection from the potential that is a grammar of use. Secondly, traditional and transformational grammars analyze clauses and sentences. They explain about word classes and have divided a sentence in terms of its subject

Varieties of classroom language

and predicate whilst systemic grammar labels element of clause in terms of the function. Thirdly, their levels of concern are sharp differences. Systemic grammar focuses on semantics which means the language has an experiential function so it has experiential meanings and logical meaning which connect the experience. They can be described functionally in terms of **Participant, Process, and Circumstances** e.g. the dogs (participant) barked (process) angrily (circumstance). In comparison, traditional grammar emphasizes rules for generating correct sentences whereas transformational grammar views the language as a set of rules which allow or disallow certain sentences structure. Fourthly, systemic functional grammar is particularly interested in describing varieties of language which depend on social situation and gives a very high priority to the sociological aspects of language. On the other hand, transformational grammar gives a very high priority to psychological aspects

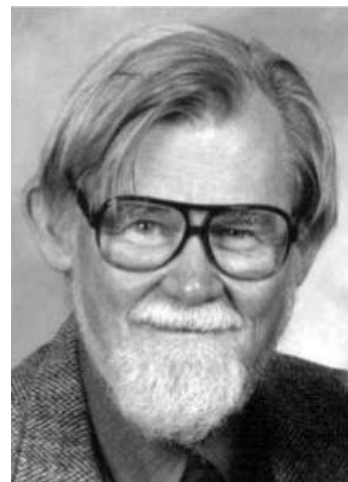


CLT activity

of language, but relatively low priority to the sociological aspects of language. Lastly, systemic linguistics, when compared with transformational grammar, can be said it gives a relatively high priority to description of the characteristics of particular language, particular varieties of languages, particular idiolects, particular texts: and a relatively low priority to the discovery of the characteristics that all languages have in common (Margaret Berry, 1975 p.30 - 32). From the discussion above it can be seen different kinds of grammar view differently. Nevertheless, they are very helpful for EFL teachers as they can be applicable to language teaching. In a foreign language situation, traditional grammar is very valuable for language learners. EFL teachers cannot ignore this kind of grammar since understanding word formation, word classes, parts of speech and basic sentence patterns are simply necessary for language learners. It should be the first step to learn a foreign language. Then, they are able to understand the overview of target language, and eventually communicative ability will be created. If learners do not understand a system of rules, it will be very hard for them to generate the language. Thus, knowledge of grammar rules is basically crucial for those learners who want to learn

a second language or a foreign language. Later, transformational grammar is relatively complicated for English language teachers who are not native speakers since they are not able to access all transformational rules. However, this theory is still crucial for both EFL teachers and language learners. In particular, if EFL teachers do not have knowledge of transformational grammar, it is very difficult for them to accommodate grammatical rules. The teachers are required to know a set of rules, grammatical structure and how a sentence is constructed. Thus, when EFL teachers deeply understand the notion of transformational grammar, they might apply this idea for language learners. An example of this is EFL teachers might explain the grammatical structure by drawing tree diagrams so that learners can understand the language structure-how it transforms. Transformational approach might encourage them to enjoyably draw tree diagrams, and they possibly can constitute sentences in a meaningful way. Finally they will meet their purpose: this method might be very effective for adult learners, for they have their long-term goal in learning a foreign language. On the other hand, this procedure should not be applicable to secondary students as it is too complicated and it might make them bored and have a bad attitude towards learning a foreign language.

Incidentally, systemic functional grammar highlights language in social contexts: how language is used in the society. In my opinion, this grammar has already gained popularity in EFL countries, such as Thailand. I agree with the idea of the actual language in use, but all the EFL situations are artificial. That is why English language is very poor in those countries. I thought, there are some ways, drawn from systemic grammar that can be applied to EFL teaching. Firstly, teachers and learners must create the situation by speaking only the target language in the classroom. It might be very hard for the first time, as EFL teachers are not fluent in conveying the language and feel a lack of self-confidence, whereas learners might be tense and shy to speak the language. Secondly, the textbooks used in the classroom should be authentic and natural. Especially, learners should have pragmatic knowledge. In the past, teaching English



Dell Hymes

seemed to fail as all texts were from overseas and learners do not have their background knowledge. Thirdly, the curriculum should be adjusted and focused on communicative competent activities rather than grammatical competent activities. Language teachers themselves have to understand thoroughly what the CLT teaching approach is like and how they could make use of this approach for their students' learning in line with what Hymes (1971) remarked that CLT aims to develop communicative competence. Lastly, digital skills (competence) and technologies play a productive role in the language classroom today. To select a digital tool that suits learners' needs is inevitable, thus accessibility the real use of language regarding creative & critical thinking skills, database & information analytical skills, multi-skills, interpersonal & intrapersonal communication skills to personalize learners' needs might be accomplished to become autonomous language users and if four suggestions are tangible, to meet the purpose of teaching-learning English might succeed in EFL situations. Nonetheless, the difficulties found in applying the CLT for students and teachers in schools for primary and secondary education are still problematic for the time being. A research study in Loei province found that the CLT could not help students to gain higher scores of the National Test or O-Net, expressed by teachers and they themselves prefer using a grammar translation method to teaching students to develop English skills. In reality, the CLT could help students develop competence comprising linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence in accordance with the National Test as well. (Natthawut Promptara, 2016) Provided that the EFL teaching situations across the nation still exist like said above, it is certain affecting Thailand 4.0 scheme; learners are unable to communicate the target language effectively.

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