Student Use of SFL Resources on Fantasy, Canonical, and Non-fiction Texts: Critical Literacy in the High School ELA Classroom

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Abstract This chapter explores how Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in an upper high school English Language Arts classroom (ELA) supported students in recognizing how language patterns in texts positions people to think and behave in particular ways. SFL resources also deepened students' language awareness as well as their writing on high stakes tests. The chapter provides educators with an example of how to use the resources of SFL with students to recognize and analyze critical issues in narrative, drama, and nonfiction texts.

Keywords Systemic functional linguistics • Critical discourse analysis • Secondary English education • Critical language awareness • Language instruction • Critical literacy

1 Introduction

Australian researcher Kristina Love (2006) accurately critiqued U.S. educators when she stated that we do not encourage "students in identifying how the language choices of a range of texts convey a particular ideological stance, and how such choices influence reader's attitude" (p. 218). Indeed, critical textual analysis in high school contexts is very rarely part of English literature or other courses. As Humphrey suggests in "'We Can Speak to the World': Applying Meta-Linguistic Knowledge for Specialized and Reflexive Literacies", of this volume, this may be because of the need for expertise in critical literacy practices. Instead there is a view of language as a vehicle of transmission. In high stakes tests, for example, students are primed to respond to factual questions but not to see how the language used is informing how those facts are constituted within discourse. Viewing language as a dynamic process to support critical literacy and expose hegemonic constructs within texts has not been fully explored as a way of teaching language in American

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classrooms (see Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010). High stakes testing has placed more and more emphasis on factual knowledge and less emphasis on critical inquiry. Students have little practice in thinking about issues of language and power because they are most often primed only to understand the story of the text, the meaning of the words and not the meaning behind them (Cranny-Francis 1996).

To illustrate how educators can integrate critical language awareness into high school curricula in the United States, this chapter will explore how a carefully crafted curriculum informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) supported students in availing of SFL resources to critique how language is used in the world around them. This chapter, part of a larger ethnographic study (see Simmons 2012), illustrates how students were offered an English Language Arts (ELA) education that provided them with "a study of language that is inseparable from the study of life" (Hymes 1977, p. 169). As earlier chapters have offered a comprehensive definition of SFL, in this chapter I simply remind readers that Halliday's (1985/1994) systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is a functional grammar that focuses on how language is designed and used; it subscribes to the idea that "grammar should not be seen as a stand-alone set of rules and definitions, but rather as a 'force of expression' within genre" (Knapp and Watkins 2005, p. 40). Through development of a metalanguage in their SFL-informed instruction, students appropriate and become critically aware of the patterns of meaning making that construct ideological stances in texts (Harman and Simmons 2014; Schleppegrell 2013).

As a veteran high school teacher, I see a definite need for development of critical language awareness (CLA) in U.S. classrooms. From a longitudinal perspective, through critical SFL students can learn to take part in "emancipatory discourse which contributes to the transformation of existing orders of discourse" (Fairclough 1989, p. 243). At a more immediate level, CLA fosters a sense of agency among students because they are equipped to challenge existing orders of discourse and even create alternative epistemologies (e.g. gender and racial categories). As Ivanic and Simpson (1992) discussed, a classroom focused on critical awareness has to *recognize* that the privileging of particular genres and language use marginalizes subgroups of society (e.g. Spanglish speakers), and that language variation is connected to social identity construction. As a result, the teacher needs to teach students *how to use* language to "look after their own interests and maintain their identity" (p. 315). This can be done by turning awareness into action by supporting students in: (1) challenging the view that the Standard American English (SAE) variety is better than any other and demanding to have a preferred variety respected; (2) gaining awareness of how some groups dominate others by silencing them; (3) rejecting the role of the "ideal reader" and learning to critically question texts; and (4) recognizing the power relations at work when entering into different discourse communities (Janks and Ivanic 1992, pp. 315–323). Such CLA assignments are enhanced through SFL instruction.

Informed by a larger ethnographic study (see Simmons 2012), the chapter builds off previous studies to further investigate how instructional use of SFL analytic resources can heighten the critical language awareness of secondary-level students in the English content area. This awareness is fostered when students analyze the

ways in which authors use linguistic patterns to manipulate a particular audience. Specifically, the chapter discusses how students conducted analyses of appraisal, identification, and modality on J. K Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Shakespeare's *Othello*, and Obama's speech at Cairo (see Martin and Rose 2003). In other words, I explore if and how the pedagogical initiative supported students in deconstructing the specific lexico-grammar and discourse semantics of narrative, drama, and non-fiction texts. The study investigated: how the instructional use of SFL analytic resources support secondary-level students in recognizing how language positions people to think and behave in specific ways; how critical language awareness of students deepened over time; and how this deepening awareness was reflected in students' writing and discourse.

2   Conceptual Framework

My role in this study was that of participant observer. As teacher of the research subjects, I was immersed in the setting, affecting and being affected by daily interactions. I chose participant observation as a research method because I was interested in "a range of dimensions of the social world" (Mason 2004, p. 85), meaning I wanted to collect data from multiple data sources including interviews, conversations, written responses. However, I also wanted to be active in the construction of curricular materials and as a participant in classroom dialogue and interactions. Like other researchers, I found carrying out this method to be personal, intimate, and extremely rewarding (Coffey 1999). However, as Mason (2004) warned, it was also exhausting. I was responsible for "observing, participating, interrogating, listening, communicating, as well as a range of other forms of being, doing and thinking" (p. 87). Further information about data collection is provided in the methods section of this chapter, but here I note that I was also responsible for creating the curriculum, recording observations, and conducting interviews. Because of my dual role as participant-observer, I had insight into my own behaviors and motives as well as those of my participants, but because of the role I played, like any participant-observer study, the results presented are based on my interpretation and analysis of events (Yin 2009) despite the fact that my interpretations were grounded in textual evidence, participant quotes, and discourse analysis methods.

From February 2012 to May 2012, I collected data from three Advanced Placement (AP) language and composition classes that I taught during the 2011–2012 school year. Over that time period, I conducted 244 h of participatory observation. During that period of time, I used a critical SFL approach in all classroom assignments, dialogue, and projects. After obtaining written permission from both parents and students, I began collecting all student work including SFL practice, projects, and academic essays, and started recording all classroom dialogue related to critical SFL. Furthermore, I selected seven focal students from those who volunteered to represent not only the diversity of my student body, but also the majority of student experiences utilizing SFL and conducting CDA.

In an effort to better foster critical awareness among my students, my theoretical lens for my curriculum framework blended key concepts of the critical theorist Paulo Freire (1986) with those of critical discourse analyst Norman Fairclough (1995). The pedagogical design was informed by my blending of Fairclough and Freire's stages of critical analysis and development, guiding students through Fairclough's (1989, 1992) stages: description, interpretation, and explanation in order to denaturalize and problematize language, ending with what Freire called "conscientization," making students systematically aware of the social effects of language choices. Both were influenced by many of the same theorists (Habermas, Gramsci, and Marx) and advocated for the same goal: emancipatory education. Since Fairclough's (1995) first and foremost aim is to promote critical goals, I aligned him with Freire's goal of intellectual emancipation, allowing for a curriculum that supported instruction based on questioning, dialogue, and respect.

The theoretical framework provided me with the rationale and approach to develop a year-long curriculum. In the current study, I show how this approach encouraged students to evaluate language use in literary and informational texts. Through the use of "explicit scaffolding, students learn to see language as a pliable repertoire of choices that can be used to accomplish a variety of social and political purposes in different contexts" (Harman 2008, p. 8). By blending the ideas of Freire, Fairclough, and Halliday in my pedagogical design, I was able to encourage learners to "take control of their own language development" (Wennerstrom 2003, p. 3) while also becoming "more critically aware of the social structure and ideologies of the culture or community that produced the discourse" (Wennerstrom 2003, p. 11) through dialogue and language analysis. As I have been immersed in this type of pedagogical initiative over the past 4 years, it is clear to me how students' appropriation of critical textual practices heightens their meta-awareness of language and power issues.

3 Systemic Functional Linguistics

As the editor and the contributors to this volume discuss SFL in each of their chapters, I simply provide the definitions and resources of SFL that informed the action research in my English Language Arts classroom. As previously stated, Halliday's (1985/1994) definition of SFL focused on a "natural" grammar that concentrated on how language is designed and used. Halliday used the concept of register to articulate how a stretch of discourse in a particular cultural and situational context simultaneously reveals the ideas (field), mood (tenor), and organization (mode) of an interaction among language users. Language, in other words, provides us a configuration of ideational, interpersonal and textual resources for different social and academic purposes. While all three metafunctions are interwoven and work in tandem, bringing meaning to each other, my study deals specifically with the interpersonal metafunction working within the register dimension of tenor. Therefore, I forgo an in-depth discussion of the ideational and textual metafunctions and the various

types of analyses that can be utilized to investigate those discourse systems in order to focus on analyses of the interpersonal metafunction.

The interpersonal resources in SFL help us to see how language and grammar position subjects (and readers) in particular ways and contexts (Fang and Schleppegrell 2010). Macken-Horarik (2009) believed that the interpersonal function makes readers question point of view and "how the text positions us to see, feel, judge, and appreciate what happens" (p. 64). By analyzing the interpersonal meanings in a range of texts, students can learn how to question language choices and see how particular linguistic patterns are used to construe ideological meanings. As shown by Schleppegrell and Moore in Chapter "Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School", this volume, focusing on the interpersonal metafunction in elementary school made students aware of the "authorial voice," allowing them to interpret how characters were being presented and to express more readily their own point of view about what they read. While in elementary school they simplified the analysis methods to make this possible, in high school, I maintained the complexity of the analysis methods and instead scaffolded the complexity of texts. Analysis methods used to determine authors' interpersonal choices included (a) appraisal analysis, (b) identification analysis and (c) modality analysis. In the following section, I provide a brief definition and explanation of each of these SFL resources as illustrated by moments from my study.

Appraisal Analysis   In previous studies (see Harman and Simmons 2014; Simmons 2012), I found Jim Martin's appraisal system to be an effective resource in helping readers evaluate the interpersonal choices of authors. According to Martin and Rose (2003), appraisal is "concerned with evaluation: the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and ways in which values are sourced and the readers aligned" (p. 22). It supports analysis of how authors use language to express and manipulate feelings and emotions. The appraisal system "offers one linguistic system that allows us to track patterns of attitudinal choices in interactions" (Love 2006, p. 224). An appraisal analysis focuses on three specific attitudes: affect, judgment, and appreciation. Affect deals with emotions that can be stated directly (e.g. *I admire her.*) or indirectly (e.g. *She looked up at her adoringly.*). Judgment shows our personal and moral admiration or criticism of people (e.g. capacity, tenacity). This can also be stated directly (e.g. *She was insulting.*), or be implied (e.g. *She thought she was better than him.*). Appreciation looks at how things (objects, settings, appearances, abstract ideas, etc.) are portrayed in a positive (e.g. *It was a very humorous thought.*) or negative (e.g. *It was an extremely malicious comment.*) light through the use of adjectives or attitudinally amplified words (e.g. "very" and "extremely" from previous examples).

Performing an appraisal analysis supports critical literacy in that it helps readers see how authors position readers and manipulate our feelings. This can cause us, as readers, to feel one way or another about ourselves or about the topic/people on which the narrator or speaker is focused. However, this "manipulation" is not always used to marginalize people; it can also be used to show positive power relationships

and reveal how language is being used to show compassion and to empower. In the excerpt below, students jointly constructed the following appraisal analysis with teacher support on "The Mirror of Erised" from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1997, pp. 212–213). This analysis highlights how Rowling uses certain linguistic choices to make readers feel a particular way about her characters (the key of analysis is the following: Affect is in **bold**; Judgment is underlined; Appreciation is in *italics*).

> 'So -- back again, Harry.' Harry felt as though **his insides had turned to ice**. He looked behind him. Sitting on one of the desks by the wall was none other than Albus Dumbledore. Harry must have walked straight past him, so **desperate** to get to the mirror he hadn't noticed him.' -- I didn't see you, sir.' 'Strange how nearsighted being invisible can make you,' said Dumbledore, and Harry was **relieved** to see that he was **smiling**. 'So,' said Dumbledore, **slipping off the desk to sit on the floor with Harry**, 'you, *like hundreds before you*, have discovered the *delights* of the Mirror of Erised.' 'I didn't know it was called that, Sir.' 'But I expect you've realized by now what it does.'

As illustrated above, analysis of affect shows that Harry's initial emotional reaction was one of fear as indicated by the indirect affect "his insides turned to ice." The fact that Dumbledore was "smiling" indirectly shows that Dumbledore is not angry at Harry. The direct affect word "relieved" expresses Harry's dismissal of fear.

An appraisal analysis of this excerpt also indicates a positive power relationship between Harry and Professor Dumbledore. Dumbledore "sits on the floor with Harry" indirectly showing his attempt to equalize himself with Harry. However, there is a clear teacher/student relationship here as seen in the judgments when Harry calls Dumbledore "Sir" as a sign of respect. The affect words also serve to show that Harry, although he feels isolated and different from other wizards, isn't so different after all in how the Mirror of Erised affects him. "Like hundreds before [him]," Harry has been consumed by the "delights" the mirror reflects. Dumbledore uses this as a teachable moment, as indicated by his gentle inquiries concerning Harry's current knowledge about the mirror. Dumbledore undertakes an assumed attempt to expand his understanding, and also points out the perils of living in dreams. As shown through an appraisal analysis, readers are encouraged to view Dumbledore as a trusted and respected mentor.

Identification Analysis An identification analysis tracks participants in the text and examines power relationships and feeling between characters (Martin and Rose 2003). By tracking participants to determine how participants are referenced and by whom, the reader can examine how a particular character or group of people is perceived by the author, other characters, or society in general. An identification analysis of the previous passage can tell the reader about the character's position in the wizarding society (See Table 1).

The numbers provided in Table 1 show how many times the participant was tracked by that particular identifier. This identification analysis further shows Rowling's intention of using this scene to foreshadow the positive power relationship that will develop throughout the series between Harry and Dumbledore. It is clear that Harry respects Dumbledore as he calls him "Sir," yet Rowling's choice to

Table 1 Identification analysis of *Harry Potter* Excerpt

Harry		Dumbledore	
Name	#	Name	#
Harry	5	I	1
He	2	Dumbledore	2
You/your	4	Sir	2
His	1	Albus Dumbledore	1
Him	1	Him	2
I	2	He	1
		You	1

have Dumbledore use Harry's first name instead of calling him Mr. Potter like the other professors at Hogwarts shows a developing intimacy between the teacher and student. Also, the fact that Harry's name is mentioned five times and the pronoun "you" in reference to Harry is used four times shows that this scene is guiding readers to focus on Dumbledore's instructional lesson to Harry, where what he learns about the mirror is the major outcome.

Modality Analysis Modality represents a speaker's "judgment of the probabilities, or the obligations, involved in what he is saying" (Halliday 1985/1994, p. 73). Modality can reveal how much we like or dislike something, agree or disagree, or how badly we desire something. While modal operators number in the tens of thousands in written and spoken discourse, in my instruction I focused on Halliday's (1985/1994, p. 363) polarity scale of high, medium, and low verbs to make discourse analysis tools more accessible to my emergent discourse analysts/students. The following are some of the examples that were used:

> High modality: must, ought, need, has, is (e.g. He **mus**t leave!)
> Medium: will, would, shall, could (e.g. She **would** understand.)
> Low: may, might, can, could (e.g. They **may** fight about that.)

Once students were sensitized into seeing how modality could scale up and down a stretch of prose, they were able to see specifically how these resources made appraisal possible. With these tools in hand, they were able to analyze for more complex modal choices such as hedging, probability, and absolute terms. The data excerpt below, jointly analyzed by students with teacher support, provides an example of how a modality analysis of the previous passage (Rowling 1997, pp. 212–213) can reveal the degrees of emotion and knowledge of the characters: (Key for below: modal verbs in bold.)

> 'So -- back again, Harry.' Harry felt as though his insides had turned to ice. He looked behind him. Sitting on one of the desks by the wall was none other than Albus Dumbledore. Harry **must have** walked straight past him, so desperate to get to the mirror he **hadn't** noticed him. '-- I **didn't** see you, sir.' 'Strange how nearsighted being invisible **can** make you,' said Dumbledore, and Harry was relieved to see that he was smiling. 'So,' said Dumbledore, slipping off the desk to sit on the floor with Harry, 'you, like hundreds before you, **have** discovered the delights of the Mirror of Erised.' 'I **didn't** know it was called that, Sir.' 'But I **expect** you've realized by now what it does.'

Just by looking at the bolded modal verbs, readers can determine that this passage involves profound emotions due to the use of high modality verbs. It positions Dumbledore as the authoritative teacher as indicated by his having high expectations (as indicated by the high modal "expect") of Harry. Dumbledore is established as a sympathetic, gentle and caring teacher when he states, 'Strange how nearsighted being invisible **can** make you.' His use of low modality keeps the question from seeming threatening. Harry is also positioned as the student through his ignorance indicated by high modal phrases such as "hadn't noticed," "didn't see," or "didn't know," showing how much he has yet to learn. The modality analysis of this passage reiterates the positive mentor/mentee relationship with Dumbledore's high expectations and gentle questioning and Harry's admission of his lack of knowledge, but desire to learn, about the wizarding world and magic in general.

4   Methodology

4.1   Research Context

This study took place over a four-month period in a suburban public high school in the Southeast of the United States. The action research study involved three sections of Advanced Placement (AP) language and composition classes for a total of 60 students. Out of these 60 students, there were 41 females and 19 males, meaning males were outnumbered in each class two to one which does not represent the 50–50 male to female ratio of the school. The racial demographics of my students were 40% minority, with nine African American students, 11 students who identified as Asian American, four Latina/o American students, and 36 European American students. The participants generally represented the norms of the high school in that they identified themselves as middle class and were accustomed to using the English-dominant norms of academic discourse. Similar to all high school teachers in public education contexts, I was directly influenced by exams and organizational standards (such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)/International Reading Association (IRA) standards, and College Board Advanced Placement (AP)) in my curriculum development and implementation.

Therefore, when I decided to incorporate critical SFL into my classroom, I had to consider how it could be implemented so as to cover the required standards and meet the expectations of the CCSS, NCTE/IRA, and College Board. In 2009, the United States government encouraged states to adopt the CCSS, claiming that lack of standardization was causing a decrease in college and career readiness. The AP language and composition exam, which consists of multiple choice questions related to reading passages and three essay questions, is considered high stakes because the student's score (1–5) determines if the student receives college credit for the course.

AP language and composition standards set by the College Board emphasize expository, analytical, and argumentative writing and focus on rhetorical choices and the connection between grammar and style.

4.2   Data Collection and Analysis

My teacher action research study combined participant observation and discourse analysis methods to explore how 60 of my students appropriated SFL linguistic tools to critically question language use in various texts. Data collection methods included field notes, classroom supplementary materials, students' written work, projects, and SFL practice as well as reflections, family dialogue journals, audio-taped student presentations, and audio-taped classroom discussions. In addition, a verbal protocol analysis was used on seven focal students, five girls and two boys, representative of my student body. I worked alongside my students as they learned how to conduct an SFL appraisal analysis, identification analysis, and modality analysis. In addition, I observed students' engagement with various genres as they used their new language analysis tools, and I employed discourse analysis methods to code and find evidence of: students' developing critical consciousness, enhanced language awareness, confidence utilizing SFL tools, and improvements in their language use.

While analyzing data for how SFL assisted in developing students' critical consciousness, I coded students' work, their protocol analyses, and discussions; I also took note of how discourse analysis helped students recognize and discuss critical themes. When analyzing these themes, I focused on how students' understanding of the interpersonal metafunction assisted them in deepening critical awareness. Furthermore, I conducted a discourse analysis on students' academic writing to investigate whether discourse analysis instruction supported an expanded set of linguistic repertoires, and if and how students used their new language analysis tools to answer Advanced Placement (AP) exam questions regarding authors' use of language.

5   Pedagogical Context

Informed by a critical perspective on literacy and language (Fairclough 1989, 1992; Freire 1986) the purpose of my curricular design was to encourage middle and high socio-economic students to investigate how language can negatively affect members of society. To accomplish this aim, I used Bruner's (1963, 1968) spiraling method when introducing texts and resources of SFL. A spiral curriculum structures information so that complex ideas are first introduced in a simplified manner and grow in complication as they are re-visited and taught again at increasing levels of difficulty, eventually leading students to independent problem solving. Through this

type of slow scaffolding, students began to use their newly acquired discourse analytic resources to evaluate not only the ideologies in literary texts but also in contemporary texts that were informed by similar middle class ideological premises as the students' own texts. Figure 1 below shows how my pedagogical approach was also informed by SFL literacy research and praxis (Macken-Horarik 1998, 2003; Rothery and Stenglin 1994, 2000), and my pedagogical cycle was modeled after Rothery and Stenglin's (1994) teaching and learning cycle (TLC).

Furthermore, many of the charts that students used in coding texts were derived from Humphrey et al. (2011). Figure 2 below shows how this cycle was implemented in my classroom.

Students went through the phases of deconstruction with teacher and peer support in the form of teacher modeling, whole class coding, and analysis on practice passages. Joint construction was achieved with group projects in which students
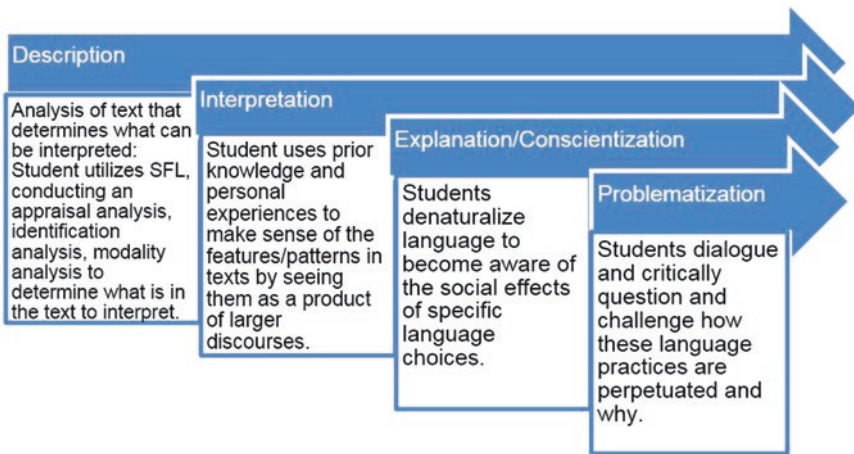

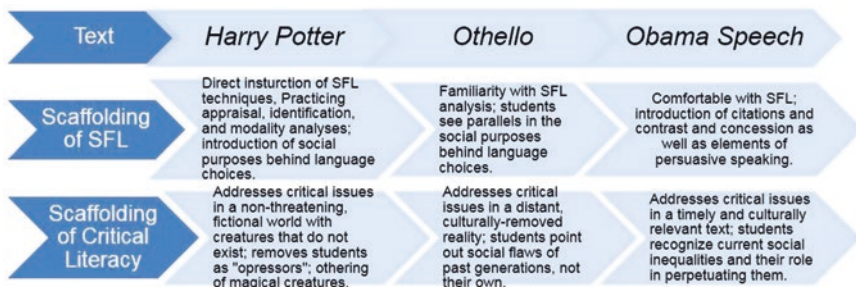**Fig. 1** Scaffolding of SFL and critical literacy by text

Fig. 2 Cycle of curriculum assignments per text

performed appraisal, identification, and modality analyses on large passages of fantasy, fiction, and nonfiction texts, and presented their analysis by engaging the class in dialogue. Independent construction was accomplished when students used what they learned from their language study to write AP exam textual analysis essays (Rothery and Stenglin 1994). The final goal of Rothery and Stenglin's (1994) learning cycle was to support students in developing a critical orientation to the text. The findings presented below show how students obtained a critical orientation through their ability to use SFL analysis tools to question the purposes behind specific language choices.

6 Findings

This chapter covers two major findings of the study as they relate to underlying questions set out in the introduction to this study. First, analysis of the data showed that the critical SFL instructional framework supported the critical questioning and evaluation of language by providing students with the metalanguage and analysis tools to find linguistic evidence to support claims. Second, student awareness deepened over time and presented itself in student academic writing and dialogue, and that this awareness has continued to develop after the students graduated from high school.

6.1 *Critical Questioning of Language Using Discourse Analysis*

Most students were able to use the results of their appraisal, identification, and modality analyses to question the social purposes behind specific language choices in *Harry Potter*, *Othello*, and Obama's Speech in Cairo.

For the *Harry Potter* project, students were asked to choose an article addressing a critical issue in the novel (e.g. racism, classism, sexism) and perform an SFL analysis of excerpts from the text to assess whether Rowling's language supported or disproved the secondary source author's claims about the novel. In the following example, focal students Grace, an outgoing, European American red-head, and Isabelle, a popular self-proclaimed "Army brat," analyzed excerpts from the novel to see if their discourse analysis of linguistic patterns supported Elaine Ostry's (2003) claims in "Accepting Mudbloods: The Ambivalent Social Vision of J.K. Rowling's Fairy Tales." The article is generally critical of Rowling's "color-blind attitude" (p. 94) and her perpetuation of "stereotypes of the fairy tale" (p. 95). The students performed an appraisal analysis of a passage where Draco Malfoy described the character Hagrid, a half-giant, and therefore non-human magical creature (Key for below: affect is in **bold**; judgment is underlined; appreciation is in *italics*):

'Yes, exactly. I heard he's *a sort* of **<u>savage</u>**—lives in a <u>hut</u> on the school grounds and every now and then he gets **<u>drunk</u>**, <u>tries</u> to do magic, and <u>ends up</u> setting fire to his bed.' (Rowling 1997, p. 78)

When explaining their analysis, the students stated that they coded the words "savage" and "drunk" as both affect and judgment words. They claimed that they were affect words because of the negative emotions of fear and disgust that are connoted with the words. They also stated that these were direct judgment words, showing Malfoy's criticism of Hagrid and anyone who associated with him. The girls further explained that they viewed the words "hut," "tries," and "ends up" to be implied judgments because they supported the picture of Hagrid as a "savage" and focused on Malfoy's belief that Hagrid was not worthy of magical ability because he was unable to perform it like the trained students and teachers of Hogwarts. The amplification of the word "savage" with the appreciation "sort of" does further injustice to Hagrid. The students claimed that he did not even receive the respect of being called a "whole" of anything—his existence is diminished. Malfoy stated that he is "sort of a savage" which showed his ignorance and lack of interest in determining the truth about Hagrid, his life, history, and magical ability.

Grace and Isabelle's appraisal analysis, to their chagrin as they were hoping to find otherwise, did support Ostry's criticism of Rowling that she supports the stereotypes of fairy tales. In this passage, the stereotype is of giants (and other "nonmagical" creatures such as merpeople, goblins, house elves, etc.), as being ignorant and animalistic. However, the students pointed out that throughout the series, Hagrid was supportive and "a good friend of Harry's" which goes against the stereotype "in a way," but that there was nothing *they found* in the text where an appraisal analysis provided a counterclaim to this portrayal of Hagrid. In fact, the students pointed out that there was no reason why Hagrid needed to live in a hut—he could have lived in the castle with everyone else. Placing him outside the "civilized" castle further supports Rowling's intention of othering him in a negative way. Here, SFL analysis did not show any authorial intent of encouraging readers to sympathize with Hagrid, but instead, revealed a harmful stereotype.

Using appraisal analysis, students were able to question a critic's claim by analyzing the primary text. Because of their love of the text and the author, the students hoped to find that the critic was wrong and that Rowling did not support stereotypes. However, after assessing Rowling's language regarding a subjugated magical creature, students found that Ostry was correct in her criticism. In this case, SFL allowed students to look past their own biases as Harry Potter lovers and analyze the language which led to further critical questioning of Rowling's intentions behind isolating and othering Hagrid.

For students' *Othello* (Shakespeare 2002) project, each group was assigned one act of the play to conduct an appraisal analysis, identification analysis, and modality analysis. Students were to create a handout and present their findings to the whole class. The example below looks at the identification analysis of Clara's group on Act I. Clara, another focal student, was a bright-eyed daughter of Nigerian immigrants. Clara's group focused on the power relationships between the characters, finding

Table 2 Excerpt from students' *Othello* Project: identification analysis

Identification analysis:
Iago: In Act 1, Iago refers to himself as "I" 49 different times, which shows he is authoritative in his speech, and also that whenever he speaks it usually pertains to himself or what he wants others to do for him.
Roderigo: Roderigo also focuses on himself and what he wants, much like Iago, which is represented by his use of "I" 12 times in Act 1. Also, Roderigo uses "we" about five times in the act to highlight the importance of his dependence upon the relationship that he and Iago share.
Brabantio: Brabantio is often referred to as "sir" or "signor" (16 times within the act), therefore this shows that he has a high rank in society, and he serves as a well-respected man. In Act 1, he uses the pronoun "you" 16 times when referring to Roderigo and Iago, which shows that he lacks respect for the two characters.
Othello: Othello is given numerous names within the act. He is referred to as a "Barbary horse", "black ram", "gondolier", "thief", and "an abuser of the world, which all characterize him in a derogatory and secluded manner. Othello is referred to as "the Moor" seven times in the first scene alone, which emphasizes the importance of his race, and how this characterization of color sets him apart from the rest of the characters in the play. The use of "I" by Othello represents his authoritative presence.
Desdemona: Within the first act, Desdemona is often referred to as "she" or "daughter". The lack of the use of her name shows that there was a patriarchal society set in the play. The lack of use of Desdemona's name makes her seem less important or an afterthought when compared to the male characters.
Duke: The duke is often referred to as "the duke" or "he", which shows that the characters respect his power and authority

that their identification analysis revealed which characters were respected more than others. For example, their handout (See Table 2) stated that "Roderigo uses 'we' about 5 times in the act to highlight the importance and his dependence upon the relationship that he and Iago share" and that "Brabantio is often referred to as 'sir' or 'signor'; therefore, this shows that he has high rank in society, and he serves as a well-respected man." Similarly, they stated that "Othello is referred to as 'the moor' seven times in the first scene alone, which emphasizes the importance of his race, and how this characterization of color sets him apart from the rest of the characters in the play" and "within the first act, Desdemona is often referred to as 'she' or 'daughter.' The lack of the use of her name shows that there was a patriarchal society in the play."

When presenting their results, Clara's group led a discussion on the social implications of Shakespeare's chosen identifiers. Students recognized that the purpose of calling Othello "the Moor" was to separate or "other" him because of his race. Two students, Miguel and Michelle, both of Hispanic descent, explained how they identified with Othello.

Miguel: I think this whole thing about the Moor and calling somebody by their name I think is more of attacking the race and making them a representative of their entire race. And so by calling Othello 'the Moor,' it is like making Othello represent all black people.

Amber: And how do you think that makes him feel? I mean can you imagine speaking for an entire race of people? Has anyone ever felt like they've been in a position like that before? Like being the only girl in the group of boys and feeling like everything that you said was a representation of what girls think? Or Hispanics or African-Americans or whatever the situation?

Miguel: Yeah. When I was in preschool, I was the only Hispanic kid in my class

Amber: Was there a sense of pressure that came with that?

Miguel: Yeah, there was a sense of it, but it's something that you get accustomed to.

Michelle: Yeah, I would say that it's kind of like labeling him one thing. It's probably not just a Moor. It's like calling all Hispanics 'Mexican.' You do that to somebody who was not Mexican. I mean it's not offending any Mexicans, it's just that there are other countries in South America that people originate from.

Miguel: Has anyone ever heard someone call the Spanish language 'Mexican'?

Michelle: Yes! I've heard people call Chinese 'Asian' too.

Miguel: Yeah, I mean there are different dialects of Spanish depending on where you'refrom, like, in certain areas of Mexico the Spanish there is different.

Michelle: Yeah, it's like European English and then American English.

Blaire: Yeah, but going back to Othello feeling like his talking for everybody, I feel like the more Iago called him 'the Moor' the more pressure it put on him. Because he knew he'd find a flaw, and you know you have one if someone keeps calling it out over and over. It was to break down Othello and by emphasizing his flaws, I think it's speeding up the process instead of calling him by his name which doesn't really do anything. (*Othello* discussion, March 9, 2012)

In this portion of the discussion, two Hispanic students, Miguel and Michelle, verbalized their understanding that calling Othello "the moor" othered Othello by making him feel like the sole representative of his race. Based on Miguel's observation, I probed for more explanation asking the class if anyone had experienced something similar to Othello's racial othering. It was no surprise, based on his comment, that Miguel did have such an experience. Michelle also shared her experience of being called Mexican when she was, in fact, Central American. Moving the conversation to language, they pointed out people's lack of knowledge about the Spanish language and its varying dialects. While the two Hispanic students shared this conversation, the rest of the class listened to their experiences. In a dialogic move, Blaire related Miguel and Michelle's experiences with race back to *Othello*. Her move showed how SFL identification analysis led to critical dialogue about the ramifications of language use that others someone because of a perceived social identity. In this case, students who occupied different spaces were able to explore their experiences and teach each other (Aronowitz 1998).

In the Obama project students were asked to conduct an SFL analysis on a portion of Obama's Speech in Cairo (The New York Times 2009), provide copies of the analysis charts for the class, and interpret and explain their findings. In this speech, Obama addresses a range of issues from religious differences to economic development and everything in-between. I selected this event because a modality analysis would support students in seeing how modality was used to construct the persuasive

nature of the speech and also how Obama and through him, the West, sees itself as powerful and able to make demands on the Middle East.

Sandi, a quiet and reflective focal student, wrote a reflection on her group's analysis of modality (see below for the group analysis) and highlighted how Obama's use of modality assisted in his persuasive goal to make arguments by laying out the facts of "how it is." She stated, "His high modality usage makes his argument very persuasive. However, I think he exaggerates when it comes to laying out the facts of 'how it is' because he uses words like 'every,' 'all,' 'always,' and 'no single' to assume that *everyone* thinks and acts in the same way, but that is not the case." Below are the excerpts from the speech to which Sandi refers (the modals she identified are bolded):

> I do so recognizing that change **cannot** happen overnight. I **know** there's been **a lot** of publicity about this speech, but **no single** speech **can** eradicate years of mistrust, nor **can** I answer in the time that I **have** this afternoon **all** the complex questions that brought us to this point…We were founded upon the ideal that **al**l are created equal, and we **have** shed blood and struggled for centuries to give meaning to those words – within our borders, and around the world. We are shaped by every culture, drawn from **every** end of the Earth, and dedicated to a simple concept: E pluribus unum – "Out of many, one."…I also **know** that Islam has **always** been a part of America's story. The first nation to recognize my country was Morocco. (The New York Times, June 4, 2009)

Not only was Sandi able to pick out the authoritative language in her analysis chart (e.g. high modality and high force), she was also able to question its intention and validity. She pointed out that just because President Obama (aka the West) feels a particular way about something, it does not mean that all cultures agree. Instead, it is just Obama speaking as though this is so. Sandi also pointed out that Obama's use of high modality created an "all or nothing" mentality. She vocalized that "he is really sure in what he says about what America is and what their goals are." In response, her classmate, Tyler, explained that by doing this, Obama insinuates that everyone else's goals should be aligned with America's. Tyler said, "I think that a lot of what he showed me is kind of going with his role and how his focus would want to be most on including as many people as possible. He …. he is trying to include the rest of the world which is difficult because these are people we've had a conflict with." Clara agreed when she added "he's saying that it's not just the United States that needs to take action but the entire world should take action."

Through these comments, it is clear that the students were able to recognize Obama's persuasive intentions behind his use of high modality. While not all people and cultures may agree with his methods or plans, his use of absolute nouns such as "everyone" and "all" persuade people to align their thinking with his in order to be a part of the majority or humanity. His modal verbs such as "must," "will," and "know" suggest that the desires of the West will be fulfilled because such predictions leave no room for choice. They indicate that the West has the power to honestly persuade, or intimidate, others to agree. Through their modality analysis, students were able to see the "warning signs" that Obama might be exaggerating his argument through his use of absolute terms, and in turn, they could question the validity of his argument and the persuasive methods of the West. It is my hope as

their teacher that as they demonstrated in their analysis of Obama's speech, these students will continue to question people in positions of power when hearing them use absolute terms.

6.2   Use of SFL in Student Academic Writing and Developing Language Awareness

Another significant finding was that the students' developing language awareness was reflected in their writing. For example, some of them engaged in SFL analyses to answer AP exam writing prompts which I created to prepare them for state tests regarding authors' use of language. One example of their appropriation of SFL analyses outside our staged analysis of the Rowling, Shakespeare, and Obama texts was when they responded to a textual analysis prompt about a passage from Shadd Cary's (1854) editorial supporting the need for an abolitionist newspaper. I chose this prompt as a final writing assignment because it provided students with opportunities to make critical comments and use their SFL skills to critique the linguistic resources that made the essay persuasive.

Specifically, the Shadd Cary passage prompt asked students to "Read the passage carefully, considering the circumstances in which it was written. Then, in a carefully written essay, analyze the techniques Mary Ann Shadd Cary uses to establish the necessity of her newspaper" (College Board 2008, p. 23). In responding, Grace and Clara used SFL analysis tools to provide evidence of how Shadd Cary's linguistic patterns supported her writing purpose. In other words, enhanced meta-awareness was evident in my analysis of the students' writing (Christie and Macken-Horarik 2007). Recognizing that Shadd Cary chose plural pronouns for a rhetorical purpose, for example, many students chose to conduct an identification analysis to use as evidence for their claims. For example, Grace used the results of her identification analysis as proof that this choice was made on purpose:

> After conducting an identification analysis on this passage, it was discovered that Cary uses many plural pronouns. She uses 'we' 23 times, 'our' fourteen times, 'us' ten times and 'ourselves' two times. She uses these pronouns to elicit a 'we are all in this together' effect. She simply shows the power of her group, and how determined they are to make a change. According to her, they cannot be stopped.

Grace's identification analysis provided her with the empirical evidence necessary to show that this is a pattern in Shadd Cary's writing, therefore making it worthy of analysis and questioning.

During this final activity, after a semester long process, it became clear to me that students were beginning to transfer their understanding of SFL to other texts and contexts. Without prompting, about 80% of the students used specific SFL analysis tools to show how Shadd Cary manipulated her audience and exuded power through her use of the plural pronoun "we." They showed that similar to how Obama spoke for America when using "we," Shadd Cary did the same for the Freeman community. The fact that students used systematic analysis of the lexico-grammatical resources

in the abolitionist essay to bolster claims they made supports my findings about student appropriation of SFL.

My analysis and comparison of students' bi-weekly writing practice for the AP exam, before and after the intervention, showed that students applied their knowledge of modality, identification, and appraisal to strengthen their arguments. For example, elements of our language study are present in Sandi's essay on animal testing. Her thesis statement read:

> Some sources may argue that animal testing is disrespectful to animals—a form of racism to a species different from their own. However, these sources are extremely biased in their opinions. They may consider morals and the suffering of animals, however they disregard the suffering of their own human race.

By comparing Sandi's application of appropriate modality, strong affect, judgment, and appreciation words in her animal testing essay written in 2012 with earlier essays in 2011, analysis revealed that as time progressed she increasingly used SFL to enhance the persuasiveness of her writing. In this way, Sandi recognized and valued persuasive writing language features (such as concession and contrast) and appropriated them in her own writing (Macken-Horarik 2006; Schleppegrell 2011). This finding also supports previous research from Harman's SFL-informed studies (2008, 2013) that concluded that familiarity with the functionality of language leads to improved writing and Humphrey et al. (2011):

> Students who can draw on resources such as modality, contrast and concession are better able to negotiate deliberate relationships with their listeners; and that those who have knowledge of how attitude is encoded, both implicitly and explicitly, are better able to read and create more analytical texts whose evaluations are more nuanced. (p. 159)

Finally, I present evidence from my continuing correspondence with several students who have graduated from the school, that their interest and use of a critical SFL approach is still developing, and that students are applying their knowledge outside of my classroom. After the study concluded, I received multiple emails from students who were involved in this curricular intervention informing me of how they were able to apply their SFL knowledge and analysis methods to their college classes and lives. For example, Clara wrote the following:

> We recently turned in our first essay in English, and I wrote about *The Declaration of Independence*, Frederick Douglass' "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?", as well as Whitney Houston's rendition of the national anthem. It was really interesting because while reading Douglass' speech, I would catch highly modal verbs or phrases, so it reminded me of your class and the work we did. (Clara, email communication, October 10, 2012)

Other students wrote, "I already blew my professor's mind with my knowing of SFL analysis" (Mary, email communication, September 11, 2012); and "I feel like my writing technique improved so much during your class because you taught me how to dissect passages on a whole new level. I've even impressed some of my professors by looking at things with SFL, it's practically ingrained in my conscience!" (Eve, email communication, September 6, 2012). Their emails serve to show how their use of SFL analysis tools have not been constrained to my classroom and that they have continued to apply them to their lives, both academic and personal.

7 Implications and Conclusion

Martin (2000) stated that "not much progress has been made with bringing discourse analysis and register analysis into schools by way of mediating and connection between grammatical meaning and genre" and that the next step in the development of a functional language curriculum is addressing "the problem of constructing functional grammar, discourse analysis, and register analysis as tools for teachers and students to use when relating language to the social, whether as part of literacy programs, or as subject-specific learning across the curriculum" (p. 120). This study has several implications for educators and scholars, like Martin, who are actively seeking ways of constructing a curriculum that focuses on the relationship between language and society.

For example, like other chapters in this volume, this study showed how students were capable and willing to learn and use a metalanguage to discuss the social implications of language choices. The SFL resources provided students with grounding for their critical observations, allowing them to revisit the language to check to see if their interpretation of the social meaning of language was correct in a specific instance. In addition, students' SFL coding of textual patterns grounded our classroom dialogue in language analysis, keeping discussion focused on the critical questioning of the social effect of language choices and leaving little room for debate or off topic discussion that often defeats the critical goals of dialogue.

Finally, while fostering critical language awareness among students was a personal goal for my classroom instruction, the study demonstrates that students found SFL valuable when engaging in textual analysis on standardized tests, suggesting that adding a critical SFL approach to the ELA curriculum does not require the reinvention of the wheel. Instead, it is a much needed spoke that can help support the implementation of Common Core mandates and strict AP standards. Furthermore, there is nothing to suggest that this type of curriculum should be reserved for AP and gifted students. I look forward to seeing and implementing further work in this arena; researchers could adapt methods presented in this study in a variety of classrooms, making a critical SFL framework a part of mainstream ELA education so that students of all abilities and grade levels can reap the benefits of rich language analysis.

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