

# Transitivity Systems Analysis of English for Vocational High School (SMK) of Sosorgadong Textbook for Grade X and Its Relevance to English Language Teaching

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**Abstract**—This paper deals with transitivity systems analysis of English for Vocational High School (SMK) of Sosorgadong Textbook for Grade X. The analysis uses systemic functional linguistics (SFL) theory (Halliday<sup>1</sup>) as the main theoretical framework, following the top-down approach to analysis. There are two problems proposed in this paper, i.e. about (1) the transitivity systems elements that characterize English for SMK 1 Textbook for Grade X, and (2) the relevance of transitivity elements (Process and Circumstance) with the English teaching and learning processes. By using the theory of SFL, it can be described (as qualitative descriptive method of research), that in all Units of reading texts in the English textbook there were 238 clauses selected methodologically to be analyzed. In these clauses, all Process Types can be found with varieties of the usage. It is found that in all units of reading texts, Material Process types was the dominant type used, i.e. (48.6%), followed by Relational Process type (27.2%), Mental Process (18.6%) Verbal Process type 8.4%, and Behavioral and Existential 7.0% each respectively. Related to the circumstance, the dominant one is Circumstance of Location (Time and Place = 37.7%). For the participant, it is related to the process exists in the text, i.e. Actor for Participant 1 and Goal for Participant 2. Research problem two deals with the results of the research that have relevance with the English teaching and learning processes. Systemic linguists do not separate language and society. Language is realized through text; this implies that texts do not have intrinsic meanings since meaning emerges according to the way texts are used in social contexts. The language chosen to express a particular meaning determines the way in which that meaning is perceived. As a result, the roles of clause where it consists of transitivity system and as the most complete language unit determine meaning expressed to the receiver.

**Keywords**—*lexicogrammar, transitivity, process types, relevance, English teaching and learning processes*

## I. INTRODUCTION

This writing is said to be interesting because of some reasons. Firstly, it was useful for the new way of analysis transitivity system analysis as part of the systemic functional grammar/linguistics. Secondly, the contribution of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) especially transitivity system analysis to language education is centred predominantly on the

theory's relevance to the explanation and interpretation of texts. It is therefore a general assumption of linguists/teachers working within this tradition that the primary 'learning outcome' of courses in SFL was an awareness of the role of lexicogrammar (the integrated system of grammar and lexis) in the production and negotiation of the social meanings that are realised in both spoken and written texts [1].

According to the kinds of texts, we can group the various texts into genres such as narrative, recount, procedures, and other functional texts. Factually, the teaching of English texts implemented in schools have been known as traditional method: the reading texts for students are conducted the same steps from time to time, so the functional grammar introduced by Halliday[1] may, at least, bring new hope for the implementation of teaching English from different angle. The text that was analyzed in this writing is taken from English for SMK 1 Textbook for Grade X. This textbook was chosen because the students used it for their learning process. By knowing the constructions of the clauses inside the texts, the students were rich of idea in recomposing and developing the clauses based on the transitivity systems.

According to Halliday[1], a text is a semantic unit and therefore its overall meaning is possible only when the whole text is taken as a single unit of analysis. And because, at text level, the basic unit of meaning lies not in a word but a clause, it follows that one hallmark of good writing skills is a learner's ability to construct clauses that seek to fulfil the meaning potential of a text for readers.

Quoting Thompson[2], the term transitivity will probably be familiar as a way of distinguishing between verbs according to whether they have an Object or not. Here, however, it is being used in a much broader sense. In particular, it refers to a system for describing the whole clause, rather than just the verb and its Object. It does, though, share with the traditional use a focus on the verbal group, since it is the type of process that determines how the participants are labelled: the „doer“ of a physical process such as kicking is given a different label from the „doer“ of a mental process such as wishing (note that even at this informal level „doer“

seems less appropriate as a label in the case of the mental process).

In the transitivity system, there are six types of process, i.e. (1) material, (2) mental (cognition, perception, affection), (3) relational, (4) behavioral, (5) verbal, and (6) existential. The participants related to each are: Material → Actor (obligatory) and Goal (optional); Mental → Senser and Phenomenon (both are always potentially present; either may, however, be implicit); Relational → Attributive type: Carrier and Attribute OR Identifying type: Identifier and Identified; Behavioral → Behaver; Verbal → Sayer, Verbiage, Receiver, Target; Existential → Existent.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Research Method

This research is a descriptive qualitative design. According to Gay[3] descriptive research involves collecting data in order to describe the current status of phenomena studied. To achieve the objective of this research, this research was designed by following qualitative research. Bogdan and Bilken [4] mention that design used in this research refers to the researcher's plan of how to proceed, and this research refers to the researcher's plan of how to proceed.

### B. Data and Data Source

Analyzing the transitivity systems for all clauses found in the textbook involves all transitivity systems, i.e. (1) Participants, (2) Process, and (3) Circumstance. The analysis in this thesis is based English textbook entitled English for SMK 1 for grade X written by Pramesti[5] as the source of data. This textbook was chosen because the students used it for their learning process. By knowing the constructions of the clauses inside the texts, the students were rich of idea in recomposing and developing the clauses based on the transitivity systems. The data of this research are all clauses found in the reading texts in all chapters. There were 234 clauses in the reading texts from four chapters in the textbook.

Documentary research involves the use of texts and documents as source materials [6]. In this research, the documents as source of data is English textbook entitled English for SMK 1 for grade X written by Pramesti[5].

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part deals with the description of the answers of problems. There are two research problems proposed in the writing, i.e. about (1) transitivity systems (Process, Participants, and Circumstances) types that characterize English for SMK 1 Textbook for Grade X?; and (2) the relationship between the results of the analysis with teaching English in Grade X SMK ?

The Transitivity Systems (Process, Participants, and Circumstances) Types that Characterize English for SMK 1 Textbook for Grade X can be said that all processes were exist in the reading texts, i.e. Material Process (Mat.Pro.) was

dominantly used (46%). The other three processes that have big number in the usage can be listed respectively, Existential Process (Exist.Pro.)=14.9%; Mental Process (Men.Pro.)=13.05%; and Verbal Process (Verb.Pro.)=11.5%. Two processes that can be said ineffective or rarely used in the texts, i.e. Relational Process Attributive (Rel.Pro.Attr.)=3.35% and, Behavioral Process (Beh.Pro.)=2.23%.

Verbs commonly appeared in each process, i.e. (1) Mat.Pro.: *find, look, move, come, get, work, visit, keep, make, take*; (2) Ment.Pro.: *please, happy, like, dream, hope, love, think, and know*, (3) Verb Pro.: *introduce, call, speak, learn, hear, say, shout, answer, and talk*, (4) Beh.Pro.: *born, live, graduate, stare*.

The followings are the results of the analysis of Circumstance (Circ.) of the texts. There were 109 circumstances spreadly used in 268 clauses with different numbers. From the analysis, there are two types of circumstance that were absent or cannot be found, i.e. (1) Contingency (Cont.) and (2) Role circumstances. Circumstance of Location: Place (Circ.Loc.P.) was dominantly used in the text, i.e. 44.9%. Circumstance of Location: Time (Circ.Loc.T.) and Circumstance of Manner (Circ.Man.) were placed in the second and third positions, i.e. 23.8% and 17.4% respectively. The other two circumstance types that have the same number and were rarely used were Cause and Role circumstances, i.e. 1.8%. The results of all analysis of the circumstance types of the text can be figured out in the following graph. The rests were Circumstance of Accompaniment (Circ.Acc.)= 7.3% and Circumstance of Extent ) Circ.Ext.)=2.7%.

The relevance of Halliday's writings on language, learning and society for language teaching is sometimes underestimated by classroom teachers. SFL is felt by some to be too complex for classroom teaching purposes, particularly in institutions where a communicative approach to language teaching dominates the curriculum, or where fluency has priority over accuracy.

As an English language teacher some of the concepts and analyses that are found immediately relevant and effective in the classroom are the following:

A clause is the highest unit of functional grammar. However, for EFL students, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between a clause and a sentence. Therefore, a comparison between a sentence and a clause has its significance in learning and using grammar. In traditional grammar, a sentence is a self-contained syntactical unit, and is traditionally divided into two parts, subject and predicate. Or, a sentence is a grammatical unit that is composed of one or more clauses. Moreover, the meaning of the term "sentence" may be expanded to include elliptical material and nonproductive items. In addition, traditional grammar sentences can be classified into three kinds: a simple sentence, a compound sentence, and a complex sentence. Compared with a sentence, a clause is a grammatical unit that includes, at minimum, a predicate and an explicit or implied subject, and expresses a proposition. Based on the definition of Halliday[1], a clause is a composite entity, which is constituted not of one dimension of structure but of three

(subject, actor, and theme). Each of the three functions construes a distinctive meaning. He labels them in three different ways, i.e. (1) „clause as message“, (2) „clause as exchange“, and (3) „clause as representation“. Therefore, the concept of a clause is quite different from that of a sentence.

Related to transitivity, the system of transitivity belongs to one mode of the ideational metafunction, that is, the experiential one. It is a resource for construing our experience in terms of configuration of a process, participants and circumstances. Thompson analyzes that when using language to interact with people, we clearly use it to talk about the world, either the external world, things, events, etc., or our internal world, thoughts, beliefs, feelings, etc [2]. When we look at how language works from this perspective, we are focusing primarily on the content of a message. When we account for the content meanings, it is the role of experiential perspective in the grammar to allow us to do so.

In addition, the term transitivity will probably be familiar as a way of distinguishing between verbs according to whether to have an object or not. However, in SFL it is used in a much broader sense. In particular, it refers to a system for describing the whole clause, rather than just the verb and its object. It does, though, share with the traditional use a focus on the verbal group, since it is the type of process which determines how the participants are labeled. Although there are innumerable kinds of goings on and ways in which they can unfold, the grammar construes a small number of distinct types, each with its own particular characteristics. Altogether, the system of transitivity discriminates six different types of process in English. The three major ones are material, mental, and relational, each with a small set of subtypes. Also, there are three further process types, the behavioral, verbal, and existential.

Implications for English Teaching and Learning Functional grammar is more sociological in orientation. It is concerned with understanding the ways in which language is used for different purposes and in different situations, serving a communicative purpose of language learning. This is what English students really need. Most English students are taught traditional grammar, and know a lot of grammar rules. In their mind, a language is a set of rules. For a communicative purpose, this mindset should be changed. They need to know how to use language in different situations. In order to achieve academic success in school, they must be familiar with school-based texts. They should know the differences of modes and genres between spoken English and written English. Through text analysis, for example, SFL can offer English students “a way of seeing how meaning and form are related in the different options available in the grammatical systems of the English language, and know how knowledge is construed in school” [7].

For most English students, because of their poor English language experience at home, they often confuse informal or spoken English with formal or written English. Therefore, the great challenge for English students is “literate” texts, which have been described as decontextualization, explicit, and complex [7]. In order to be familiar with literate texts, it is

necessary for English students to know how language works in these texts.

Transitivity patterns represent the encoding of experiential meaning, which is meaning about the world, about experience, about how people perceive and experience what is going on. Transitivity patterns in text can explain how the field of the situation is being constructed, for example describing what is talked about and how shifts in the field are achieved [8]. In this case, the teachers need to know how the texts work so they can explicitly help learners learn how to understand and produce texts, both written and spoken for various purposes [9]. For example, Relational Processes play a key-role in education in some subjects such as science, geography, mathematics, and economics. It is through these Processes that these subjects create an ordered technical vocabulary, and a way of classifying the world. They are fundamental in how the above-mentioned subjects construct the world [9].

Butt et al say that distinction between different types of Processes draw attention to structural patterns in the clause which may otherwise be considered by some students as arbitrary rather than related to meaning and function [10]. Often in language classroom the examples of English clauses which students meet are built around Material Processes. The structures of these clauses, and of the verbal groups which release Material processes, tend to be held up as the norm. As a result, the structures of clauses built around Relational and projecting processes can seem somehow irregular or difficult. If students are aware from the beginning that there are different types of clauses making different types of meaning, the differences in structure will be revealed as functional. Verbs expressing Mental Process are interesting examples of how an apparently arbitrary rule of English grammar appears to be functionally motivated when viewed in terms of the Experiential Meaning. In standard dialect of English, verbs expressing a Mental Process are less likely to be used in continuous forms than those expressing a Material Process. Halliday[1], usually calls 36 these phenomena as marked and unmarked clauses. For examples, the unmarked tense of Material and Behavioral Processes are simple past and present continuous. While, the unmarked tense of Mental Processes are simple past and present tense.

Transitivity is also useful for helping students to respond critically to the texts they encounter. The words and structures chosen by producers of texts reveal how they perceive and experience what is going on in the world. An exploration of experiential grammar therefore reveals a great deal of the worldview expressed in a text. The ways in which the texts are organized are equally important. Text in the textbook is one of many sources of knowledge that support the process of understanding. Each sentence, which is consists of the number of clauses, combines into larger part of text supported by their cohesion and coherence. This is also suggested by Nunan[11] about some knowledge needed to understand the text. They are understand the grammar and vocabulary used in constructing the sentence which make up the text, know how the sentences relate each other, and the readers need to be able to interpret the sentences in relation to one another.

In conclusion SFL in general, and lexico-grammar in particular, has only a short history, but it has now come to be recognized as a major force in world linguistics. As English teachers, it is necessary to have a good knowledge about SFL because it is part of the English language and may bring a great change to English teaching and learning. Pedagogically, SFL has its own advantages and can facilitate English students to achieve success in their learning if English teachers can find a good way to teach its concepts in order. Also, it can help English students to achieve success in other subject areas like pur and social sciences. Besides its significance in teaching and learning, SFL has opened a wide research field in linguistics. With SFL, language teaching and learning will be more interesting and meaningful.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The transitivity systems of texts found in students English textbook used in class X SMK Negeri 1 in general can be said as the complete one. All of the Process types (Material, Mental, Verbal, Relational, Behavioral, and Existential) can be found in the textbook with the exception of some Process types that were absent. The characterized Participant Functions of the reading text were the Participants of Material process namely Goal and for Relational Process namely Carrier, Attribute, Identified, and Identifier.

From all Process types used in all Units of the reading text (250 clauses), Material process type was the dominant one, i.e. 46.4%. Beside Material process type, Relational process type was also relatively exist in big number, i.e. 31.2%. The rests were under 10%.

The results of the analysis in general were relevant with the process of teaching and learning English. Related to transitivity, the system of transitivity belongs to one mode of the ideational metafunction, that is, the experiential one. It is a resource for construing our experience in terms of configuration of a process, participants and circumstances. When using language to interact with people, we clearly use it to talk about the world, either the external world, things, events, etc., or our internal world, thoughts, beliefs, feelings, etc. When we look at how language works from this perspective, we are focusing primarily on the content of a message. When we account for the content meanings, it is the

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