

# TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSLATION OF STUDENT TRANSLATORS

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## Abstract

This paper aims at finding out the structure of transitivity elements used in the translation of student translators through which typical characteristics of Indonesian history text would be obtained. This is a qualitative study taking the English history text entitled „Early History of Yellowstone National Park“ and the text translated by 15 student translators as the data. The student translators are the second grade students of Master’s Degree Program of Linguistics Department majoring translation studies at the University of Sumatera Utara in the 2017/2018 academic year. Translog was used as the instrument for data collection. The data were analyzed using a content analysis. The results of data analysis indicate that the student translators’ TTs used 6 out of 8 types of processes, and material process is the most-used type of process. In terms of circumstances, 8 types of circumstances are used in the student translators’ TTs, and a circumstance of place is the most-used circumstance. It is concluded that these findings would become the prototype of characteristics of Indonesian history text.

**Keywords:** SFL; student translators; transitivity elements; history text.

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## Introduction

The involvement of linguistics theories in translation studies in the recent years becomes more and more obvious since they can replace the intuition of the translator to solve their translation problem. One of linguistics theories concerning with the meaning is systemic functional linguistics (SFL) which views grammar as a resource for making meaning. As Hatim (2001, p. 10) argues that SFL can be considered a viable and valid contribution to a textual practice like that of translation, whose products are “meaningful records of communicative events”. Such records are realized in the reproduction (House, 2001, p. 247) of the source text (ST) in the target text (TT). Therefore, translation should provide the target language (TL) readers the same understanding of reading the ST and the TT (Rosa, 2017, p. 13).

The involvement of SFL theories in translation is one of the many contributions of Halliday in translation studies (TS), particularly in building bridges between linguistic theory and professional practice (Yallop, 1987, p. 347). Although linguistic theories, particularly SFL theories, involvement in translation continue to be debatable (Bell 1991; Manfredi, 2011), most of TS scholars agree that linguistic theories offer a set of conceptual tools that can assist the mental problem solving in translation (Chesterman & Wagner, 2002, p. 7). The involvement of SFL theories in translation was initiated by Halliday’s article on machine translation (1966), and since then a number of studies on translation involving SFL theories has been growing rapidly, such as using SFL as the theoretical approach in TS (Catford, 1965; Newmark, 1987; Halliday, 1992, 2001; Manfredi, 2008, 2011, 2014), SFL theories in process- and product-oriented translation studies (Bell, 1991; Rosa, 2017; Rosa et al., 2017; Sofyan & Tarigan, 2017; 2018), and SFL theories in translation quality assessment (House, 1997, 2006; Kim, 2007, 2009).

The consideration of SFL theories importance in translation has been shown in many works of professional translators indicated by the TT naturalness and the corresponding lexicogrammatical features used in the TT. Meanwhile, student translators, those involved in formal studies of translation, often use their intuition in resolving translation problems. This phenomenon should become a concern for translation scholars who understand and experience the great assistance of SFL theories in translation. The application of SFL in translation is viewed from the language components realized in ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions (Halliday, 1994) used in constructing the TT, and the one that functions to ensure the lexical cohesion in the TT is ideational metafunction through its transitivity system (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 30) representing processes or experiences including actions, events, processes of consciousness and relations.

Using transitivity elements (process, participant and circumstances) enables translators to represent the ST original meaning in the TT despite the frequent use of shifts (Alaei & Ahangari, 2016; Rosa et al., 2017), and

Rosa et al. (2017) found that professional translators did more metafunctional shifts than did student translators. Process is central to transitivity (Gerot & Wignell, 1994, p. 54) without which there will never be a clause. Process refers to a semantic verb, i.e. a process of doing, happening, feeling, sensing, saying, behaving, and existing (Halliday, 1994), taking its own unique set of participants (see Halliday, 1994; Gerot & Wignell, 1994). Another transitivity element, circumstance, answers such questions as „when“, „where“, „why“, „how“, etc. (Refnaldi & Rosa, 2016). Circumstances include a circumstance of time, place, manner, cause, accompaniment, matter and role (Gerot & Wignell 1994, p. 52-53). Therefore, according to this view, the transitivity elements in the TT should be able to achieve the ideational meaning contained in the ST despite frequent shifts.

In relation to the problems elaborated in the previous paragraphs, this paper aims at finding out the structure of transitivity elements used in the translation of student translators.

**Method**

This was a qualitative study taking the ST and the TT as the data. The ST was the English history text entitled „Early History of Yellowstone National Park“ downloaded from <http://www.nezperce.com/yelpark9.html> which was translated into bahasa Indonesia by 15 student translators, the second grade students of Master’s Degree Program of Linguistics Department majoring translation studies at the University of Sumatera Utara in the 2017/2018 academic year. The ST readability was measured with the help of SMOG readability formula. Translog was used as the instrument for data collection. The data were analyzed using a content analysis.

**Results and Discussion**

As process is central to transitivity system, the data display begins with the types of process used by the student translators in their TTs. The results of data analysis indicate that the student translators’ TTs used 6 out of 8 types of processes as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of processes in the translation of student translators

Student Translators	Types of processes							
	Material	Mental	Attributive	Identifying	Possession	Verbal	Behavioural	Existential
A	11	3	4	0	0	0	0	0
B	10	4	4	0	0	1	0	0
C	13	2	0	0	0	1	1	0
D	8	4	1	0	0	1	2	1
E	10	3	4	0	0	1	0	0
F	9	4	3	0	0	2	0	0
G	11	3	4	0	0	1	0	0
H	10	3	5	0	0	0	0	0
I	12	3	4	0	0	0	0	0
J	10	4	4	0	0	0	0	0
K	10	2	5	0	0	1	0	0
L	12	2	4	0	0	0	0	0
M	10	3	3	0	0	2	0	0
N	9	2	5	0	0	0	0	1
O	11	3	3	0	0	1	0	0
P	10	3	3	0	0	2	0	0
Q	11	4	4	0	0	0	0	0

The results of data analysis presented in Table 1 show that material process is the most-used process in all of student translators’ TTs. This means that one of the characteristics of Indonesian history texts is the frequent use of material process, a process of doing and happening. This is in line with the nature of history text (a text that belongs to a recount text) whose social function is to retell something that happened in the past or to tell a series of past events (Gerot & Wignell, 1994, p. 120; Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p. 224).

In addition, the results of data analysis in Table 1 also display that identifying and possession processes are not found in the student translators’ TTs. This finding is influenced by the characteristics of Indonesian history texts whose first participant usually begins a clause. In Indonesian history texts, readers want to know “what it was”, “where it was”, or “when it was”; therefore, rarely does the second participant begin a clause. In other words, the position of the first participant is irreversible with the second participant. Besides, the absence of possession process indicates that a history text does not talk about what the participant possessed, but talks about what happened to the participant. The TT in 1 is the example of the use of attributive process is more preferable.ST:

There	They	remained	isolated and sheltered	from the world	around them.
Circ: Place	Carrier	Process: Attributive	Attribute	Circ: Place	Circ: Place

TT:

<i>Di sana</i>	<i>Mereka</i>	<i>Terus</i>	<i>terasingkan dan terkurung</i>	<i>Dari dunia luar.</i>
Circ: Place	Carrier	Process: Attributive	Attribute	Circ: Place

The TT in (1) shows that the process „*terus*“ is Attributive because its second participant „*terasingkan dan terkurung*“ is not the identity of the first participant „*mereka*“; in other words, „*mereka* (they)“ cannot be simply identified as those who are isolated and sheltered because other people might also be isolated and sheltered. Therefore, the TT second participant serves only as the Attribute of the first participant.

Unlike the TTs, the ST uses an identifying process despite its appearance only in one clause as can be seen in (2), indicating that identifying is a common process in an English history text.

(1) ST:

The mountain	ranges	surrounding Yellowstone
Token	Process: Identifying	Value

And	its pristine valleys	provided	shelter, protection, and food
	Actor	Process: Material	Goal

TT:

<i>Pegunungan ((yang mengelilingi Yellowstone dan lembah-lembah alaminya))</i>	<i>menyediakan</i>	<i>rumah, perlindungan dan makanan</i>
Actor	Process: Material	Goal

The first ST in (2) is composed by the use of identifying process „*ranges*“. This means that „*surrounding Yellowstone*“ is the identity of „*the mountain*“ because it is only found there. However, such identifying process is not found in any of the TTs. The TT in (2), for example, embeds the first ST as the first participant serving as the Actor for being bound by the material process „*provided*“. In other words, the ST two clauses are joined into one clause in the TT. Other student translators, although they did not embed the first ST as the TT first participant, did not use an identifying process in their TTs; they shifted it into a material process as in (3a-d).

(2) a.

<i>Pegunungan</i>	<i>mengitari</i>	<i>dataran tinggi Yellowstone.</i>
Actor	Process: Material	Goal

b.

<i>Rangkaian pegunungan</i>	<i>mengelilingi</i>	<i>Yellowstone.</i>
Actor	Process: Material	Goal

c.

<i>Pegunungan itu</i>	<i>melingkari</i>	<i>daerah Yellowstone.</i>
Actor	Process: Material	Goal

d.

<i>Pegunungan</i>	<i>mengelilingi</i>	<i>Yellowstone.</i>
Actor	Process: Material	Goal

In (3), all of the TTs use material processes in three different synonymous dictions, i.e. *mengitari*, *mengelilingi* and *melingkari*. The three words are equivalent in meaning with the ST word „*surrounding*“ which means that the ST process „*ranges*“ is deleted in the TTs. The deletion technique used by the student translators is done because the meaning of „*ranges*“ has been included in the word „*surrounding*“ which can be used as a preposition in the ST. Such shift, according to Rosa et al. (2017), is called “the shift from a process to another process”.

The other finding displayed in Table 1 is the very few frequent uses of behavioural and existential processes in the TTs. Behavioural process is only found in two TTs (written by student translator C and D); likewise, existential processes are found in the TTs written by student translator D and N, respectively. The behavioural

process written by student translator C, for example, is the result of dividing one ST clause into two TT clauses. Study the ST and TT in (4).

(3) ST:

There	they	remained	isolated and sheltered	from the world	around them.
Circ: Place	Carrier	Process: Attributive	Attribute	Circ: Place	Circ: Place

TT:

<i>Di daerah itu</i>	<i>mereka</i>	<i>tinggal</i>
Circ: Place	Actor	Process: Material
<i>dan</i>	<i>terisolasi</i>	<i>dari dunia di sekitarnya.</i>
	Process: Behavioural	Circ: Place

In the second clause of the TT, the process „*terisolasi*“ is equivalent in meaning with the ST Attribute „isolated“. It belongs to a behavioural process because „isolated“ is related to human’s psychological state in the sense of being psychologically distant from the normal life of human. The decision of student translator C to divide the ST into two TT clauses is mainly motivated by the effort not to be interfered by the SL style, but to reveal the typical characteristics of the TT through process shift. Meanwhile, the TT process „*tinggal*“ is derived from the attributive process „remained“. In the TL, the word „remained“ is equivalent with either „*tetap*“ (belonging to relational process) or „*tinggal*“ (belonging to material process). Student translator C decides to use the process „*tinggal*“ to make the clause unified with the previous clause explaining Yellowstone Plateau as the place for Native Americans to live. As a result of the process shift, its participant is also shifted. The participant (*mereka*) equivalent with the Carrier „they“ in the ST is shifted into the actor. The very few frequent uses of behavioural and existential processes in the TTs are related to the characteristics of the translated text giving more emphasis on telling the history of Yellowstone Park rather than describing the sites or places which can be found in Yellowstone Park.

Like behavioural process, existential process is only used by two student translators one of which can be seen in (5).

(4) ST:

To the north ((of what is now Yellowstone Park))	flows	one of its great rivers, the Yellowstone.
Circ: Place	Process: Material	Actor

TT:

<i>Di sebelah utara taman Yellowstone,</i>	<i>terdapat</i>	<i>sungai Yellowstone ((yang mengalir deras)).</i>
Circ: Place	Process: Existential	Existent

The TT in (5) uses the existential process „*terdapat*“ whose equivalent (exist) is not found in the ST, indicating that a process shift has taken place. Such shift is a good decision since the word „*terdapat*“ is usually used in Indonesian history texts. As a part of recount text, one of the characteristics of lexicogrammatical features of history text is the use of existential process (Rosa et al., 2008, p. 96). Despite the small frequency of behavioural and existential features in the TTs of student translators, this can become a reference to say that they are common processes in the Indonesian history text.

Furthermore, the results of data analysis indicate that material, attributive and mental processes are the three dominant types of processes used in the student translators“ TTs as displayed in Figure 1.

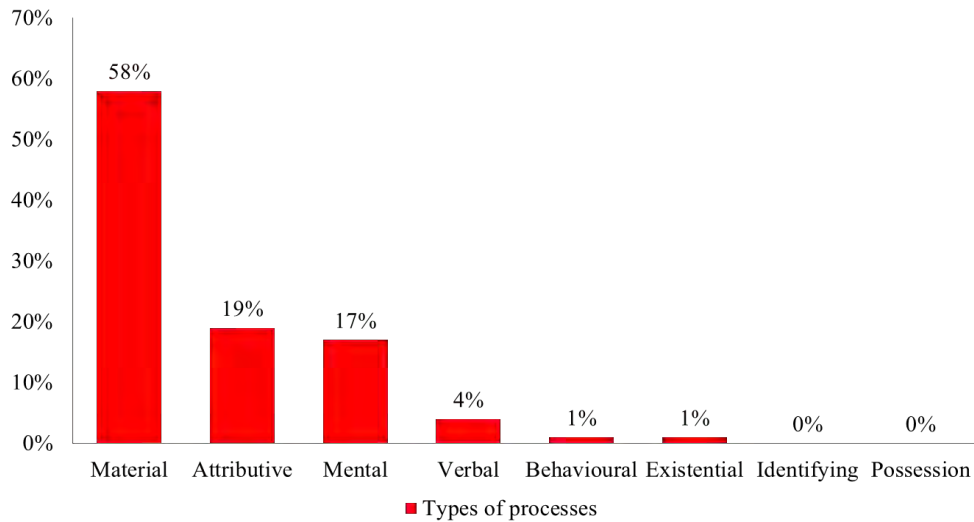


Figure 1. Average number of processes used in the translation of student translators

This finding is interesting since it reveals the typical characteristics of Indonesian history text. In another text, e.g. narrative text, Nurlela, Ganie, & Sofyan (2018) found material, attributive and verbal processes are the three dominant processes used in the English version of Hikayat Deli text. The difference is caused by the frequent use of dialogues in a narrative text allowing the frequent use of verbal processes. Meanwhile, a history text belongs to a recount text telling a series of events that happened in the past, usually presented without any dialogue.

Another transitivity element, circumstance, is also an important finding in the translation of the student translators. This finding is highlighted in this paper due to the frequent shift as can be seen in (6).

(5) ST:

as	Shoshones, Bannocks, and Nez Perce	traversed	the protective natural highway en route	to the "Buffalo Country" of Wyoming and Montana.
	Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circ: Place

TT:

<i>Dengan hilir mudiknya suku Shoshoni, Bannocks, dan Nez Perce</i>	<i>maka terbentuk</i>	<i>jalan raya yang masih hijau dan alami</i>	<i>menuju "Buffalo Country" Wyoming dan Montana.</i>
Circ: Contingency	Process: Material	Goal	Circ: Place

In (6), the ST used conjunction „as“ which does not belong to a transitivity element. However, in the TT, such conjunction is shifted into the transitivity element, circumstance of contingency. The shift in the TT is the result of the student translator’s interpretation of the conjunction „as“, which contains the meaning of the TT’s first participant (Shoshones, Bannocks, and Nez Perce) and its process (traversed). Such two transitivity elements are combined to create the new transitivity element in the TT „*Dengan hilir mudiknya suku Shoshoni, Bannocks, dan Nez Perce*“. Therefore, in addition to the circumstance of place „*menuju "Buffalo Country" Wyoming dan Montana*“, the TT also has a circumstance of contingency. The type and number of circumstances used in the translation of student translators are displayed in Figure 2.

Table 2. Types of circumstances in the ST and TTs

No.	Types of Circumstances	Frequency	
		ST	TTs
1	Place	9	7
2	Time	2	3
3	Role	0	1
4	Accompaniment	0	1
5	Manner	4	3
6	Contingency	0	1
7	Reason	4	2
8	Comparison	2	1
	Total	21	19

The results of data analysis presented in Table 2 indicate the differences of circumstances used in terms of both their types and frequencies. In the ST, the 21 circumstances are divided into 5 types; meanwhile, the average of 19 circumstances used in the TTs of the student translators is divided into 8 types. This means that, in addition to circumstances of place, time, manner, reason and comparison, the TTs also use circumstances of role, accompaniment and contingency. The circumstance of contingency enhances the 7 types of circumstances found by Nurlela et al. (2018) in their study. In addition, Table 2 also shows that circumstance of place is the dominant type of circumstance used in the student translators' TTs. Such dominant use corresponds to the nature of history text that tells an event or events in certain places.

## Conclusions

Based on the findings, it is concluded that the translation of student translators reveals the prototype of characteristics of Indonesian history text. In terms of process, Indonesian history text uses material, attributive and mental processes dominantly. In addition, the use of behavioural and existential processes is common in the Indonesian history text. The dominant use of the three processes is caused by the social function of Indonesian history text, i.e. to give readers information about a particular event in terms of "what it was", "where it was", or "when it was". The other characteristics of the transitivity element of Indonesian history text include types of circumstances. There are 8 types of circumstances used in the Indonesian history text (circumstances of place, time, manner, reason, comparison, role, accompaniment and contingency), although a circumstance of place is the most-used circumstance.

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