



AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSITIVITY SYSTEM IN MEMOIRS WRITTEN BY EFL STUDENTS

Riyan Wahyuni¹, Hamzah Hamzah², Delvi Wahyuni³

English Department

Faculty of Languages and Arts

Universitas Negeri Padang

email: riyanwahyuni@gmail.com

Abstract

Although there have been many studies about the language style of the writer in many kinds of writing, but there are few studies found in analyzing language style towards EFL students' writing. This study is intended to investigate stylistics of EFL students writing. The purpose of this study is to identify the linguistic choices by investigating transitivity system of process types, participants, and circumstantial elements that characterize EFL student's writing in memoirs. The analysis in this study is based on Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) theory of ideational metafunction. This research used descriptive research. The data consist of 950 clauses that were obtained from 15 texts of memoir written by English Department student of State University of Padang in West Sumatera. The finding shows the students' texts consist of processes, participants and circumstantial elements which fulfill the linguistic features in carrying meaning. The study has found that material process (338 data) is placed as the most dominant process types found in student's writing. Then participant of human (916 data) is found as the most dominant one in student's writing. And for circumstantial element, the circumstance of location (183) is found with the highest percentage in student's memoir.

Key words: Transitivity System, Memoir, EFL students

A. INTRODUCTION

Transitivity is one of the theory in linguistics study which belongs to *experiential metafunction* of *Systemic Functional Linguistic*. Briefly, Systemic Functional Linguistic concerned with the meaning of language, where each meaning forms parts of different functional configuration. There are three functions of language based on SFL theory, those are Interpersonal function which is intended to describe the social relationship between language and its

¹ English ELLSP of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang graduated on March 2019

² Lecturer of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang

³ Lecturer of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang



maker either in written or spoken language, Textual function which is intended to describes the way meaning constructed cohesively, and Experiential function which describes how language is used to construe experiences.

According to Halliday and Mathiessen (2004:29), experiential function allows language users to present their world experience through the lexico-grammatical choices they make, which are part of transitivity system. In line to the explanation above, Gerot and Wignell (1994:5) stated that transitivity represents meaning through linguistic choices and language use systematically. It means, in both written and spoken language, its user has their own linguistic choices to express their idea into their writing or utterances. This *linguistic choices* allows them to use their own expression in constructing the idea. Therefore, among the three functions of language in metafunction, experiential metafunction is chosen in order to analyze the linguistic choices of the language user.

As a linguistic tool in analyzing experiential function, transitivity investigates meaning in the clause level. Clause is considered as a central unit in expressing meaning. Through the analysis of transitivity, a clause is analyzed into three main aspects, those are process, participants and circumstance. These aspects structurally describe the whole clause in texts. As Hassan (1988) stated in Nguyen (2012) that ‘process’ represents human experience such as action and feeling of the real life which is encoded into text. Moreover, as a clause structure process do not stand alone. According to Satria, Hamzah and Fitrawati (2018), since transitivity is called as a system, so it does have a pattern. As a pattern, participant always involve into the process as an obligatory elements. Participant represents the entity which involve to the process itself. Then, circumstance sometimes occurs as additional component to give a clear idea in a clause. These three aspects are called as *transitivity system*.

Transitivity offers a chance to be analyzed in every genre of the text. In this current research, the researcher figure out that this is necessary to analyze how transitivity is built in the genre of creative writing because this kind of writing allows its writer to express their writing creatively compared to other writing. There are some researchers who have conducted the study of transitivity in creative writing, as in poems (Danish, 2014; Wulansari and Waluyo, 2016), short stories (Nguyen, 2012; Swift, 2016; Mehmood, Amber, Ameer, and Faiz, 2014), song lyrics (Zahoor and Janjua, 2016) and biography (John, 2011). Due to the lack of transitivity study found in memoir text, the researcher finds gap to analyze memoir as a genre in creative writing. Moreover, the researcher uses EFL students writing as the object in this research because the researcher wants to find out the linguistic choices of EFL students in writing a memoir.

This research belongs to an under lecturer research which aims to find the style of EFL students writing by investigating the linguistic choices. This research used Halliday’s framework of transitivity analysis to analyse the data. The findings of this research show the dominant of process types, participant types, and circumstantial elements that characterize EFL students’ writing.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research belongs to descriptive. Descriptive approach was chosen because this research describes the findings found. However, quantitative calculation was used in this research because the analysis were presented in statistics and using the percentage to find the dominant process, participant and circumstance. As the result, the percentage was used to find the result of what and how transitivity components are used to characterize student's memoir.

The data analysis in this research were the transitivity components which consist of process, participant and circumstance found in students' memoir texts. These components were categorized into the type of the process, the type of the participant and also the type of the circumstance. The sources of the data in this research were the clause form of memoir texts written by English department students of Padang State University, West Sumatera in academic years 2016 that have already taken in Introduction to Literature subject because the three components of transitivity system are found in the clause level.

The researcher collected the texts from student's assignment that had been done in the subject of 'Introduction to Literature'. From 75 texts that were collected from 4 classes that had done memoir assignments, the researcher use random sampling to obtain the data source by choosing 20 percent of the number of texts that have been collected. There were only 15 texts was chosen as the source of the data because those texts have represented all of students' texts style in this research. After the texts were chosen, each text was segmented into clauses form in order to get the data for transitivity analysis.

In doing this research, there were four steps that were done. The first step was identifying the data. After the texts were segmented into clauses and the data were collected, the three components of transitivity system were identified from the clauses based on the process, participant and circumstance by using Halliday's framework. After identifying the data, the data was categorized in the data sheets based on the types of process, the roles of participant and the circumstantial elements. Then, the researcher calculated the data in the table of percentage to get the most dominant of process types, participant roles and circumstantial elements that characterizing students' texts. After calculating the data and find the percentage of each transitivity components, the last thing that the researcher did was draw the conclusion. It was used to give a brief explanation about the findings. In this research, the conclusion was the style found in student's writing by using the percentage of the most dominant of process types, participant roles and circumstantial elements that characterizing student text.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding

This part presented the findings of this research which answer the three research questions. There are 950 clauses were analyzed in this research. The

clauses were classified by the transitivity components which consist of process, participant and circumstance. The characterized processes found are material, mental, verbal, relational, behavioral and existential. The distribution of the process types of transitivity analysis characterized student's writing can be seen in the table below:

Table 1: Process Types of Transitivity Analysis in the Student's Writing of Memoir

Process	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Material	338	38
Mental	213	24
Verbal	47	5
Relational	184	21
Behavioral	95	11
Existential	17	2
Total	950	100

Material Process is the highest process found in the memoirs. It occurs 338 times (38%) in student's memoir and it refers to process of construing material world of doing and happening. Mental Process occurs 213 times (24%). It refers to process of perception, affection or reaction and cognition. Verbal Process occurs 47 times (5%) which refers to the process of construing something said by its participant. Relational Process occurs 184 times (21%) and it construes relationships of being and having. Behavioral Process occurs 95 times (11%) in the memoirs and it refers to process of behaving. And the last, existential Process has the lowest frequency of occurrence and it only occurs 17 times (2%) in the student's writing.

There are 1501 Participants found in this research. It reflects the process types that are characterized in the student's writing. The numbers of participant roles in the process also represents the dominant process. The result of the participant of transitivity analysis that is characterized in student's memoir is shown in the table below:

Table 2: Participants of Transitivity Analysis in Student's Writing of Memoir

Participants	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Human	916	61
Non-Human	585	39
Total	1501	100

From the table above, it can be concluded that the most dominant participants found in the student's writing is human participant. This participant

occurs 916 times (61%). It is followed by non-human participant which occurs 585 times (39%).

For the circumstances, there are 376 circumstantial elements found in this research. The result of circumstantial elements of transitivity analysis characterized in student's writing in memoirs is shown in the table below:

Table 3: Circumstantial Elements of Transitivity Analysis in Student's Writing of Memoirs

Circumstances	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Extent	27	7
Location	183	49
Manner	73	19
Cause	73	19
Contingency	0	0
Accompaniment	13	3
Matter	0	0
Role	5	1
Angle	2	1
Total	259	100

From the table above, the circumstantial elements that are characterized student's writing are extent, location, manner, cause, accompaniment, role and angle. In this research, location is the highest frequency circumstance that is about 183 times occur (49%). Moreover, the researcher did not find the circumstantial element of matter in this research.

2. Discussion

The finding in this research reveals the linguistic choices of students writing in memoir texts. The linguistic choices are seen on the dominant types of process, participant, and circumstance. Based on the findings, there are three points that had been studied in this research. *First*, the finding shows that the process of material is dominant in students' texts which is followed by the process of mental. This case denotes that to tell some action or some event becomes the most common information in students writing. In this research, the students tended to use material process. It is because the students' texts are narrative. As Gerot and Wignell (1994:204) explained that grammatical feature which commonly used in narrating is the material process. It means the physical character in the form of action and event are mostly portrayed in the memoir. It was showed in their writing, the students mostly told about what they had been done or experienced in their past. Furthermore, this process was also followed by mental process. Since memoir text tells about its writer experience in the real life,

the mental process revealed that students also mostly told about their feeling towards their experiences.

Second, the participant which mostly characterized students text is the participant of human. According to Gerot and Wignell (1994:204), the common participant found in narrative text is the individualized participant. In this study, the students put themselves in the story as the individual which experienced the material process. However, It is obvious that process and participant is a unity components that cannot be separated on the clause level. The first finding shows the material process come out as the dominant process used by the student in arranging story. In line with the first finding, it can be concluded that the role of 'actor' become the participant role which describe the role of the main character found in this research. The role of the participant shows who or what is told and attached in the process. In other words, the participant which refers to the writer of the memoir itself has the 'actor' role which doing the most dominant process.

Third, the circumstance of location was found mostly occurred in students texts. According to Emilia (2014: 168) in Wulandari (2016), adverbial of time and place are usually used in narrative text in order to locate the events. Most of circumstance of location occurred in students texts was used to give the detail information about the place and time of where and when the story happened. By giving the detail elements in the clause structures, the writer visualized their experienced by locating the time and place in order to give the reader a clear information about what they want to tell.

Furthermore, to determine the compatibility of students writing to write a memoir, the researcher compared this research with the previous study which carries out transitivity analysis in the same genre. The study which was conducted in purpose to determine the linguistic choices in the same genre was conducted by John (2011). She conducted the transitivity analysis in the genre of biography. Mostly, her findings share the same linguistic choices compared by the current study. She found that material process was used as the most dominant process in arranging the biographical text. However, by comparing this research with her research, the researcher found how John (2011) relates the system of transitivity with the schematic structure of biographical text. Based on her finding, biographical text has three stages which share different amount of the types of process. The three stages are: 1) the Introduction to the Subject, 2) 'Life as a grown up', 3) Evaluation-Late Works and Life after Death. Her finding showed the first stage was dominated by Material process and followed by Behavioral process, the second stage was dominated by Material process which followed by Mental process, and the third stage was dominated by Material process which followed by Mental process and Existential process. These stages reveal that experiential meanings provide the further realization on the staged genre. The stages classify the dominant process through the sequential scheme. Meanwhile, the memoir text which was analyzed in this research was not formed in an obvious schematic structure. The students tended to focus on the story rather than the way the story written in schematic way. It shows that the EFL students' texts of

memoir have a weak schematic structure. This matter becomes the weakness for EFL student in writing a proper memoir text.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The current research which using the system of transitivity shows how EFL students as the memoirists express their story in a memoir text. This research focused on the students linguistic choices within Systemic Functional Linguistic by Halliday and Mathiessen (2004). This research attempts to answer the three research questions. First, “What are the process types that characterize memoir written by EFL students?” Second “What are the participant types that characterize memoir written by EFL students?” Third “What are the circumstance types that characterize memoir written by EFL students?”.

For process types, material process was used the most in students’ text. It is followed by mental process which occupies the second place and relational process in the third place. Meanwhile existential process is found as the fewest process which followed by verbal process and behavioral process. The material process as the most dominant one represents the physical actions and events in memoir text. It shows that the memoir texts are written to inform about actions performed and events happening in the life of EFL students as the memoirist.

Then participant types that is found in student’s writing were divided into two types, those are human and non-human participants. The participant of human is found as the most dominant one in student’s writing with a ratio 3:2 compared to the participant of non-human. The human participant mostly refers to its writer or the student as the main character of the story.

And for circumstance types, there were only eight types found in students’ texts. Those are extent, location, manner, cause, contingency, accompaniment, role and angle. No type of matter found in this research. Location is found as the dominant circumstance elements found in students texts while angle is the type in the lowest position found in students’ texts. The dominant circumstance shows that the students tended to visualized their experienced by locating the time and place in order to give the reader a clear information about the location of the story take place.

Based on the conclusion above, there must be some gaps that still can be analyzed. This research uses only one aspect of Systemic Functional Linguistics in analyzing style that is the usage of experiential metafunction. There are still two more aspects that can be analyzed to complete the analysis in Systemic Functional Linguistic. It is highly suggested for the next researcher or the student who wants to study about SFL in literary text to do the analysis of the rest of metafunction analysis that are textual and interpersonal function. Furthermore, in terms of data, it is suggested to use another kind of writing which was written by students such as non-literary text and scientific writing text.

For linguistic students, it is suggested for them to learn about transitivity theory in order to understand how people arrange their sentences to construct the meaning, especially the sentences produced in literary texts because the style of its writer in writing can be shown by their linguistic choices.

For memoir's writer, It is recommended to understand of both language structure and also language functions in order to help themselves in arranging the text appropriately. But, not only the writer that must be understand about the function of language, but the reader also have to understand what the text or sentence means from the using of metafunctions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bloor, Thompson., Bloor, Meriel. (2004). *The Functional Analysis of English*. London: Arnold.
- Burke, Michael. (2014). *The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics*. Newyork: Routledge.
- Bustam, Muhammad Rayhan. (2011). *Analyzing Clause by Halliday's Transitivity System*. *Journal of Jurnal Ilmu Sastra*, vol.6: 22-34.
- Danish, Malik Haqnawaz. (2014). *A sytemic Functional Analysis of the Mystic Poet Baba Bullay Shah "Main Jana Jogi Day Naal"*. *Journal of International Journal of Linguistics*, vol. 6: 1-11.
- Doyen, Barbara. (2016). *What is a Memoir? What Makes a Memoir Different from an Autobiography or Biography?*. <https://www.barbaradoyen.com/writing-nonfiction/what-is-a-memoir-what-makes-a-memoir-different-from-an-autobiography-or-biography/>. Retrieved: 28 March 2018.
- Earnshaw, Steven. (2007). *The Handbook of Creative Writing*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd.
- Eggs, S. (2004). *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistic*. 2nd Ed. Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd
- Gerot, Linda., Wignell, Peter. (1994). *Making Sense of Functional Grammar*. Australia: Gerd Stabler.
- Halliday, M.A.K., Mathiessen, Christian M.I.M. (2004). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. 4th Ed. United States: Oxford University Press.
- John, Christina. (2011). *A Systemic Functional Investigation into Experiential Meanings in the Biographies of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert*. Published Thesis. Faculty of Language and Linguistics. University of Malaya. Kuala Lumpur.
- Mehmood, Asad., Amber, Roshan., Ameer, Sobia., Faiz, Rabia. (2014). *Transitivity Analysis: Representation of Love in Wilde's the Nightinglae and the Rose*. *Journal of European Journal of Research in Social Sciences*. Vol.4: 78-85.

- Nguyen, Hanh Thu. (2012). *Transitivity Analysis of “Heroic Mother” by Hoa Pham*. *Journal of International Journal of English Linguistics*, vol. 2: 85-100
- Satria, Rizky., Hamzah, Hamzah., Fitrawati, Fitrawati. (2018). *Language Style Between Public Speakers in Public Speaking Performances*. *Journal of Journal English Language and Literature*. Vol.7. No.4
- Simpson, Paul. (2004). *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*. London: Routledge.
- Sinar, T.S. (2018). *Analisis Wacana Multimodal: Teori Linguistik Sistemik Fungsional*. Medan: USU Press.
- Swift, Sophie. (2016). *A Stylistic Analysis of Transitivity Processes and their Effects in Ted Hughes’ ‘The Bee Meeting’*. *Journal of Innervate*, vol 9-17.
- Wulandari, Niyati. (2016). *Transitivity System in Two Versions of Cinderella Stories: A Systemic Functional Perspective*. Published Thesis. Faculty of English Language Teaching Department Tarbiyah and Teacher Training. Syekh Nurjati State Islamic Institute. Cirebon.
- Wulansari, Atsani., Waluyo, Sri. (2016). *Meaning Behind the Poem: An Analysis of Transitivity of Poems in Romanticism Period*.
- Zahoor, Mehwish., Janjua, Fauzia. (2016). *Character Construction in Tributative Songs: Transitivity Analysis of the Song ‘I am Malala’*. *Journal of Frames*. Vol.20: 201-213.