



## Students' Ability in Identifying Transitivity System: A Study at English Language Education Program of UNP

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this research is to know students' ability and students' difficulties in identifying transitivity system. The population of this research was all English Language Education Program of UNP in academic year 2021, while the sample of this research was K2 Class which consisted of 22 students. This research used descriptive with quantitative method and included two instruments: transitivity test and questionnaire. The transitivity test was used to know the students' ability in identifying transitivity system while questionnaire was used to know students' difficulties faced by them. The mean of student' ability in identifying transitivity system was poor with score 47.72. In addition, students' difficulties in identifying transitivity encountered that there were several significant challenges. The most difficulties that faced by the students were relational identifying process, mental process and verbal process. Difficulties in relational identifying process was difficulty in determining "role" "identity" or "meaning" with 86.3%. Difficulties in mental process were difficulty in determining verbs of feeling, thinking, and perceiving with 81.8%. Additionally, in verbal process, students had limited understanding of the function of Target with 77.2%.*

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## INTRODUCTION

According to Gerot and Wignell (1994), grammar as a theory of language which shows the process of language happened. Then, Thornbury (1999) also clarified that grammar is analysis the meaning in the form of the sentences. It means that grammar is the component of a language and rules of how language units such as words and phrases are structured to form sentences that convey the meaning. Meanwhile, Halliday (2014) stated that functional grammar focuses on the way language is put together, so that meaning is communicated for particular purposes. It means that functional grammar analyzes the communicative situation. In conclusion,

functional grammar provides a deep understanding of how grammar influences the way human express ideas and interact with others by human's communicative purposes.

As time goes on, language also experiences the changing. The perspective toward grammar has shifted, that is from traditional grammar to modern linguistics. Blake (1988) stated that traditional grammar was taught in England universally in 15<sup>th</sup> century. Traditional grammar is known as "Language as a set of rules", which focuses on the ways of words are organized within sentences. Meanwhile, in modern linguistics, there is a language approach, Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) which is known as functional grammar. Furthermore, Halliday (2014) also clarified that systematic functional linguistics had metafunction.

Metafunction means the process of making meaning. Halliday (2014) also divided that there are 3 types of metafunctions: ideational metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, and textual metafunction. Ideational metafunction refers to the speaker's strength of meaning as an observer so the speaker can encode experiences to the world around them. Interpersonal metafunction concerns with the speaker and addressee interact each other. Lastly, textual metafunction is related to how people organize their experiences through written and spoken form.

Functional Grammar has many materials, one of them is transitivity system. Aisaro and Suhardi (2023) said that transitivity system refers to how actions or events are connected in a clause. It means that transitivity is the way of looking at how verb work in a clause. Furthermore, According to Halliday and Matthiessen (1999) transitivity construes the world of experience into set of process types. By looking verb in a clause, people can know what types of process that another people's used. Transitivity is categorized as ideational metafunction that relates to the context of culture. Ideational metafunction is represented by a clause then a clause is analyzed into some process, participants and circumstances (Halliday, 2014).

Due to shifting perspective toward grammar phenomenon, from traditional grammar to functional grammar as part of modern linguistics, transitivity system material is also learned by English Language Education Program students of Universitas Negeri Padang that required by curriculum. As a part of students' course, they should understand transitivity system since they must accomplish their study. The students need to learn transitivity system because as a graduating student who will become a teacher, the teacher can develop students' understanding toward grammar such as verb in teaching different genre of the text. For example, when the teacher teaches a narrative text, the teacher can engage transitivity system to the students. For example, in the orientation (generic structure of narrative text), the process of transitivity system can be appeared is existential process which means introducing people, places, or things in the story. The teacher can briefly explain another process of transitivity system for other generic structures in narrative text. Then, by implementing transitivity system, it help students understand what the text talk about.

The syllabus of Functional Grammar requires the students to analyze some clauses or a text based on transitivity system. As learners, the students of English Language Education Program find difficulty to understand transitivity system because of its complexity. It is supported by Martin (1992) who said that transitivity system

has complexity because it requires depth of analysis to understand transitivity system. Moreover, it seems reasonable since transitivity involving three semantic categories such as participants, processes, and circumstances. The participants are individuals that involve in process. The processes represent the type of action expressed by the verb. Lastly, circumstances provide additional information about the process.

The researcher interviewed students of English Language Education Program at Universitas Negeri Padang to know what difficulties they face in understanding the transitivity system. They stated that transitivity system material is difficult to understand because of various reasons. Transitivity system requires the students to shift their thought from a traditional grammar to a modern linguistics. In functional grammar, the students think simply, while in modern linguistics the students must think deeply. It means that the material of transitivity system is more difficult to understand because transitivity system required analytical thinking. The students used to learn traditional grammar in Senior High School. When the students entered University and chose English Language Education Program, they were confused about this transitivity system material as part of modern linguistics. This happens because the students do not experience analytical thinking when learning traditional grammar. Then, when the lecturer asked the students to do a task about transitivity system, the students were confused in identifying process for each clauses. As the result, they cannot classify the participant that belongs to the process. According to the previous explanation, the researcher is interested to know the students' ability and students' challenges in analyzing transitivity system.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The researcher was interested in conducting research using the descriptive research design with quantitative method to know the students' ability and students' difficulties in identifying transitivity system. The sampling method that was used in this research was cluster random sampling. The researcher took one class from the four classes population as the sample. The sample was K2 in academic year 2021 which consisted of 22 students. The instruments of this research were transitivity test and questionnaire. The transitivity test was used to obtain the data about the students' ability in identifying transitivity system, while questionnaire was used to obtain the data about students' difficulties in identifying transitivity system. The instrument of this research was validated by one of the English Department of Padang State University lecturers and also SPPS. The transitivity test was taken from New Headway Academic Skills Oxford, 2007. Moreover, the questionnaire consists of 28 statements and two followed-up open ended questions. This questionnaire was designed based on Halliday's theory.

The data collection was conducted to K2 in academic year 2021. First, the researcher came to the classroom distribute transitivity test and gave 90 minutes to do that test. After that, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to each of the participating in K2 in academic year 2021 class. Once the participants were done, the data were collected and analyzed. The data that have been collected were processed through mean score and descriptive statistics.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

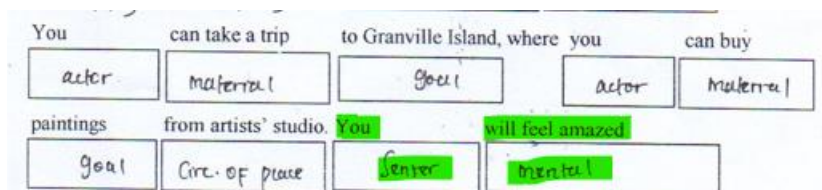
**Research Finding**

*Finding 1 Students' Ability in Identifying Transitivity System*

STUDENT	SCORE	CLASSIFICATION
STUDENT 1	41	Poor
STUDENT 2	56	Average
STUDENT 3	50	Average
STUDENT 4	41	Poor
STUDENT 5	42	Poor
STUDENT 6	32	Poor
STUDENT 7	12	Poor
STUDENT 8	14	Poor
STUDENT 9	36	Poor
STUDENT 10	25	Poor
STUDENT 11	45	Poor
STUDENT 12	61	Good
STUDENT 13	57	Average
STUDENT 14	60	Good
STUDENT 15	56	Average
STUDENT 16	58	Average
STUDENT 17	60	Good
STUDENT 18	56	Average
STUDENT 19	61	Good
STUDENT 20	64	Good
STUDENT 21	59	Average
STUDENT 22	64	Good

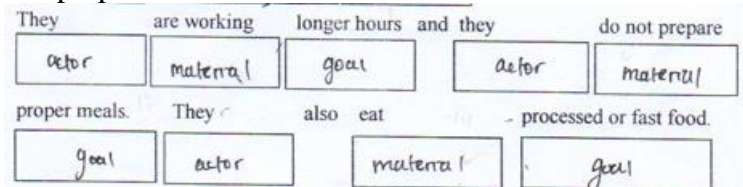
According to the results of transitivity test from 22 students, nine students were in poor classification, seven students were in average classification, and six students were in good classification. In addition, the mean was obtained from summed up the total score divided by number of all students. The result was 47.72. Related to the class performance, it is categorized as poor performance. The analysis of students' answer in transitivity test can be seen below.

A. Material Process



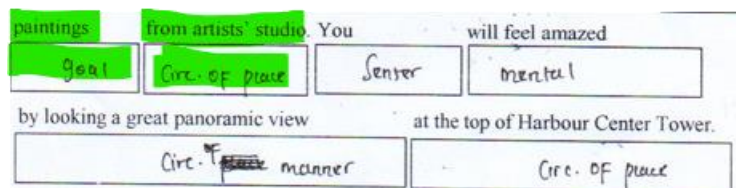
This was the example of material process in this transitivity test. There were sentences "You can take a trip to Granville Island, where you can buy painting from artists' studio". The analysis of these sentences was 'You' = Actor (correct), 'can

*take a trip* = Material Process (correct), *'to Granville Island'* = Goal (wrong), *you* = Actor (correct), *'can buy'* = Material Process (correct), *'paintings'* = Goal (correct), and *'from artists' studio'* = Circumstance of Place (correct). The only one mistake was *'to Granville Island'*. It should be circumstance of place because there was word *'to'* which known as preposition.

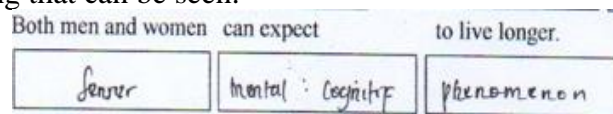


There was another example of material process. There were sentences "*They are working longer hours and they do not prepare proper meals. They also eat processes or fast food.*". The analysis of these sentences was *'They'* = Actor (correct), *'are working'* = Material Process (correct), *'longer hours'* = Goal (wrong), *'they'* = Actor (correct), *'do not prepare'* = Material Process (correct), *'proper meals'* = Goal (correct), *'they'* = Actor (correct), *'eat'* = Material Process (correct), *'processed of fast food'* = Goal (correct). The only one mistake was *'longer hours'*. It should be Circumstance of Time because it explains how long you are working.

### B. Mental Process

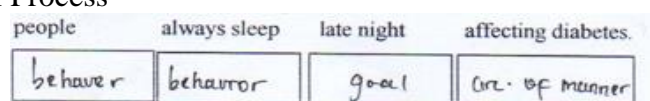


This was the example of mental process in this transitivity test. There was a sentence "*You will feel amazed by looking a great panoramic view*". The analysis of this sentence was *'You'* = Senser (correct), *'will feel amazed'* = Mental Process (correct), *'by looking a great panoramic view'* = Circumstance of Manner (wrong), *'at the top of Harbour Center Tower'* = Circumstances of Place (correct). The only one mistake was *'by looking a great panoramic view'*. It should be Phenomenon because it is something that can be seen.



Another example of mental process, there was a sentence "*Both men and women can expect to live longer*". The analysis of this sentence was *'Both men and women'* = Senser (correct), *'can expect'* = Mental Process (correct), *'to live longer'* = Phenomenon (correct). There was no mistake in this sentence.

### C. Behavioral Process

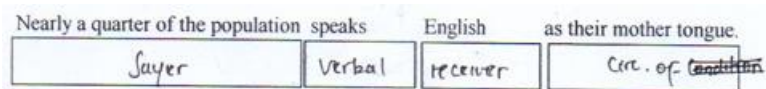


This was the example of behavioral process in this transitivity test. There was a sentence "*people always sleep late night affecting diabetes*". The analysis of this



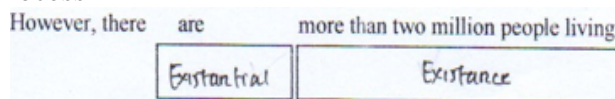
sentence was 'people' = Behaver (correct), 'always sleep' = Behavioral Process (correct), 'late night' = Goal (wrong), 'affecting diabetes' = Circumstance of Manner. The only one mistake was 'late night'. It should be Circumstances of Time because it tells when time you sleep.

D. Verbal Process

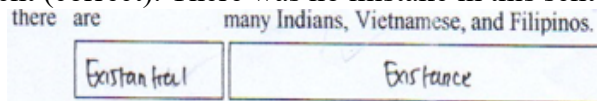


This was the example of verbal process in this transitivity test. There was a sentence "Nearly a quarter of the population speaks English as their mother tongue". The analysis of this sentence was 'Nearly a quarter of the population' = Sayer (correct), 'speaks' = Verbal Process (correct), 'English' = Receiver (wrong), 'as their mother tongue' = no answer (wrong). The mistakes were 'English' and 'as their mother tongue'. 'English' should be as Verbiage, while 'as their mother tongue' should be Circumstance of Role.

E. Existential Process

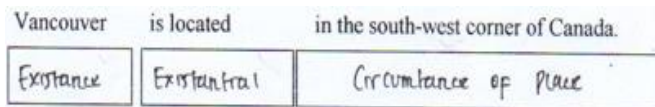


This was the example of existential process in this transitivity test. There was a sentence "However, there are more than two million people living". The analysis of this sentence was 'are' = Existential Process (correct), 'more than two million people living' = Existent (correct). There was no mistake in this sentence.

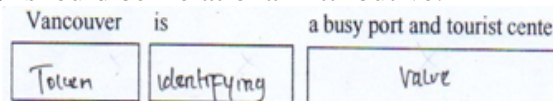


Another example of existential process, there was a sentence "there are many Indians, Vietnamese, and Filipinos". The analysis of this sentence was 'are' = Existential Process (correct), 'many Indians, Vietnamese, and Filipinos' = Existent (correct). There was no mistake in this sentence.

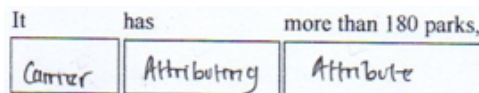
F. Relational Attributive Process



This was the example of relational attributive process in this transitivity test. There was a sentence "Vancouver is located in the south-west corner of Canada". The analysis of this sentence was 'Vancouver' = Existence (wrong), 'is located' = Existential Process (wrong), 'in the south-west corner of Canada' = Circumstance of Place (correct). There were two mistake in this sentence. 'Vancouver' should be Carrier, while 'is located' should be Relational Attributive.

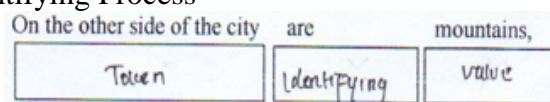


Another example of relational attributive process, there was a sentence "*Vancouver is a busy port and tourist center*". The analysis of this sentence was '*Vancouver*' = Token (wrong), '*is*' = Relational Identifying Process (wrong), '*a busy port and tourist center*' = Value (wrong). This sentence should be Relational Attributive process, where '*Vancouver*' as Carrier, '*is*' as Relational Attributive Process and '*a busy port and tourist center*' as Attribute.

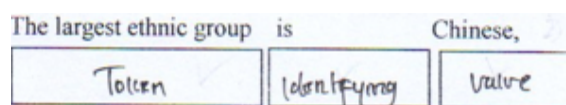


there was a sentence "*It has more than 180 parks*". The analysis of this sentence was '*It*' = Carrier (correct), '*has*' = Relational Attributive (correct), '*more than 180 parks*' = Attribute (correct). There was no mistake in this sentence.

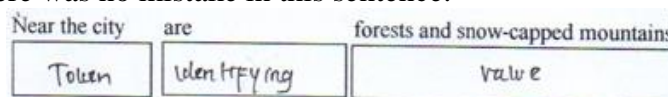
### G. Relational Identifying Process



This was the example of relational identifying process in this transitivity test. There was a sentence "*On the other side of the city are mountains*". The analysis of this sentence was '*On the other side of the city*' = Token (correct), '*are*' = Relational Identifying Process (correct), '*mountains*' = Value (correct). There was no mistake in this sentence.



Another example of relational identifying process, there was a sentence "*The largest ethnic group is Chinese*". The analysis of this sentence was '*The largest ethnic group*' = Token (correct), '*is*' = Relational Identifying (correct), '*Chinese*' = Value (correct). There was no mistake in this sentence.



There was a sentence "*Near the city are forests and snow-capped mountains*". The analysis of this sentence was '*Near the city*' = Token (correct), '*are*' = Relational Identifying Process (correct), '*forests and snow-capped mountains*' = Value (correct). There is no mistake in this sentence.

### Finding 2 Students' Difficulties in Identifying Transitivity System

Based on the data collected, in material process for analyzing action verbs, most students had difficulty in determining action verbs because there were 68.2% choosing Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). Meanwhile, in analysing the participants in material process (Actor & Goal), most students did not have a limited understanding of the differences of the functions of Actor and Goal because there were 77.3% choosing Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

In mental process, for analysing verbs of feeling, thinking and perceiving, most students had difficulty in determining verbs of feeling, thinking, and perceiving

because there were 81.8% choosing Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). Meanwhile, in analysing the participants in mental process (Senser & Phenomenon), most students have difficulty identifying participant as Senser and Phenomenon because there were 63.7% choosing Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA).

In behavioural process, for analysing behaviour verbs, most students could not distinguish between behaviour verbs with non-behaviour verbs because there were 72.7% choosing Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). Meanwhile, in analysing the participant in behavioural process (Behaver), most students had a limited understanding of the function of Behaver because there were 63.7% choosing Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA).

In verbal process, for analysing verbal expression, most students did not have difficulty in determining verbal expression because there were 59.1% choosing Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Meanwhile, in analysing the participants in verbal process (Sayer, Receiver, Verbiage, Target), most students had a limited understanding of the function of Target because there were 77.2% choosing Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA) as this was the highest score of the percentage. The lowest percentage was in Sayer because most students did not have a limited understanding of the function of Sayer because there were 68.2% choosing Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

In existential process, for analysing word “There”, most students did not have difficulty in understanding the word “There” in an existential process because there were 68.2% choosing Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Meanwhile, in analysing the participant in existential process (Existent), most students did not have difficulty in identifying Existent because there were 63.7% choosing Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

In relational attributive process, for analyzing “general characteristics” or “description”, most students had difficulty in determining “*general characteristics*” or “*description*” in relational attributive process because there were 77.2% choosing Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). Meanwhile, in analysing the participants in relational attributive process (Carrier & Attribute), most students had a limited understanding of the differences of the functions of Carrier and Attribute because there were 54.6% choosing Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA).

In relational identifying process, for analysing “role”, “identity”, or “meaning”, most students had difficulty in determining “*role*”, “*identity*” or “*meaning*” in relational identifying process because there were 86.3% choosing Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). Meanwhile, in analysing the participants in relational identifying process (Token & Value), most students did not had difficulty identifying participant as Token and Value because there were 54.5% choosing Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD)

### **Discussion**

Based on data finding, it was found that the students’ ability in identifying transitivity system was 47.72, convinced as poor performance where nine students were poor performance, seven students were average performance, and six students were good performance. To support this, according to Martin (1992) transitivity system was complexity because it required depth of analysis. It could be seen from



scores transitivity test. This can happen because the students found many challenges that had written above. In addition, others aspect also can happen such as lack of basic grammar, confusing to identify process.

In identifying transitivity, students found difficulties faced by them. It could be seen from the results of the questionnaires. Halliday (2014) has mentioned that there are six processes in transitivity: material process, mental process, behavioral process, verbal process, relational process, and existential process. The results of these questionnaires showed that there were three transitivity processes that had the highest percentage of challenges when students analyzing transitivity. The first process of transitivity was relational identifying process (86.3%). The students find it difficult to determine "role "identity" or "meaning" in relational identifying process. The students often could not distinguish between relational identifying and relational attributive process. According to Butt, et al (2003) The difference between relational identifying and relational identifying process is that the relational identifying expresses an identity or role, whereas relational attributive expresses a characteristic or attribute. For example, "*John is the leader*" (relational identifying) vs "*John is a leader*" (relational attributive).

The second process transitivity was mental process (81.8%). The students find it difficult to determine verbs of feeling, thinking, and perceiving in mental process. It was difficult for students because of the ambiguity of verb. Sometimes, the verbs were used in different contexts. According to Bahri (2016), context is important in determining the meaning of language. For example, "*I hear that she will go abroad*" (mental process) vs "*I hear the sound of birds in the morning*" (material process). The verb "*hear*" in the first sentence was categorized as mental process because the context of that verb was aware of information (thinking), while the verb "*hear*" in the second sentence was categorized as material process because the context of that verb was reception of the sound directly (involved physic).

The third process transitivity was verbal process (77.2%). There are several participants in verbal process: Sayer, Receiver, Verbiage and Target. The students find it difficult to understand one of the participant functions in verbal process, namely Target. It happened due to lack of understanding of the theory regarding Target. According to Lock (1997), Target is the participant who becomes the target of the verbal action. Sometimes, the students considered Target to be the same as Receiver, whereas Receiver is actually the participant who receives the utterance made by Sayer. Among the various participants in verbal process, Students found it easy to understand the function of Sayer.

The previous research about students' ability and students' difficulties in identifying transitivity system had not been conducted. The research about transitivity system focused on the number of transitivity processes in the text: descriptive text or narrative text, or focused on speech and teacher talk in the classroom.

## CONCLUSION

This research aimed to know students' ability in identifying transitivity system and students' difficulties in identifying transitivity system. The research was conducted for K2 class of English Language Education Program students at Universitas Negeri Padang in academic year 2021. Transitivity test and questionnaire

were instruments in this research. Based on the data findings, it can be seen that the students' ability in identifying transitivity system was poor performance with the mean score was 47.72.

For the students' difficulties in identifying transitivity system, it showed that there were many difficulties faced by the students. Based on the results of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that the difficulties that are mostly faced by students were relational identifying process, mental process and verbal process. Difficulties in relational identifying process related to difficulty in determining "role" "identity" or "meaning" with 86.3 %. Meanwhile, difficulties in mental process related to difficulty in determining verbs of feeling, thinking and perceiving with 81.8%. Additionally, in verbal process, students had limited understanding of the function of Target with 77.2%.

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