

A Transitivity Analysis of Students' Writing Recount Text Based on Systemic Functional Linguistics at SMP Negeri 27 Medan

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Abstrak: This study analyzed the types of transitivity processes and the realization of transitivity processes found in students' recount text writing at SMP Negeri 27 Medan. The study was conducted because many students still experienced difficulties in expressing ideas and organizing experiences effectively in recount texts. This research aimed to identify the types of transitivity processes used by students and to describe how the processes were realized through process, participant, and circumstance elements in clauses. This study applied a descriptive qualitative method. The data of this research were clauses taken from five recount texts written by seventh-grade students of SMP Negeri 27 Medan. The data were analyzed based on the transitivity system in Systemic Functional Linguistics proposed by M. A. K. Halliday and Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen. The findings showed that six types of transitivity processes were found in the students' recount texts, namely material process, mental process, relational process, verbal process, behavioral process, and existential process. Material process became the dominant process because students mostly described physical activities and past experiences through action verbs. In addition, the realization of transitivity processes was represented through process, participant, and circumstance elements. The findings indicate that students were able to represent experiences and meanings through language in recount text writing, although most of the texts still used simple sentence patterns and limited vocabulary. This study is expected to contribute to English language teaching, especially in improving students' writing ability through the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics.

Keywords: Transitivity Process, Recount Text, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Students' Writing, Transitivity Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Language plays an important role in human communication because it is used to express ideas, feelings, opinions, and experiences in both spoken and written forms. In English language learning, students are expected to master four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these skills, writing is considered one of the most difficult skills because students need to organize ideas, apply grammar correctly, select appropriate vocabulary, and construct meaningful texts. Writing also requires students to express experiences and information systematically so that readers can clearly understand the intended meaning. Therefore, writing becomes an important skill that should be developed by students in English learning.

In junior high school, students learn several text genres such as descriptive, narrative, procedure, and recount texts. One of the genres commonly taught to seventh-grade students is recount text. Recount text is a type of text used to retell past experiences or events chronologically. The purpose of recount text is to inform or entertain readers by describing events that happened in the past. In writing recount texts, students usually describe activities, feelings, situations, and experiences through clauses and sentences. Therefore, students need not only grammatical competence but also the ability to represent meaning appropriately in their writing.

One approach that can be used to analyze meaning in language is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) proposed by M. A. K. Halliday and Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen. SFL views language as a social semiotic system used to create meaning in communication. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), language has three metafunctions, namely ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. This study focuses on ideational metafunction, especially the transitivity system, because transitivity is closely related to how people represent experiences through language. Through transitivity analysis, researchers can identify how actions, feelings, thoughts, relationships, communication, and existence are expressed in clauses.

The transitivity system consists of three main elements, namely process, participant, and circumstance. Process refers to actions, events, thoughts, feelings, or states represented in clauses. Participant refers to the people or entities involved in the process, while circumstance provides additional information such as time, place, manner, and condition. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) classify transitivity processes into six types, namely material process, mental process, relational process, verbal process, behavioral process, and existential process. These processes are important in analyzing students' writing because they show how students represent experiences and organize meaning in texts.

Several previous studies related to transitivity analysis in students' writing have been conducted. Utami, Munawwaroh, and Dinata (2022) found that material process was the most dominant process used in students' recount texts because students mainly focused on describing physical activities and events. Similarly, Faradina and Emilia (2024) reported that students tended to use material process more frequently than other process types in recount writing. In addition, Fadiarachmanda (2024) revealed that students mostly represented experiences through action verbs rather than expressions of feelings or thoughts. These studies indicate that transitivity analysis is useful in understanding how students construct meaning through writing. However, most previous studies focused on senior high school students or analyzed only the dominance of process types. Research analyzing the realization of transitivity processes through process, participant, and circumstance in junior high school students' recount texts is still limited.

Based on preliminary observation, many students still experience difficulties in organizing ideas and expressing experiences effectively in recount text writing. Students often use simple sentence structures and limited variations of processes in their writing. As a result, the meaning represented in the texts is sometimes unclear or less developed. Therefore, analyzing students' recount texts through transitivity system is important because it can help explain how students represent experiences and construct meaning in their writing. This study is significant because it contributes to English language teaching, especially in helping teachers understand students' writing characteristics and difficulties in constructing recount texts.

This study aims to identify the types of transitivity processes used in students' recount text writing at SMP Negeri 27 Medan and to describe how the transitivity processes are realized through process, participant, and circumstance elements in clauses. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method because the data are analyzed descriptively based on Systemic Functional Linguistics theory. The data of this study are clauses taken from students' recount texts written by seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 27 Medan.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the broader field of discourse analysis and English language teaching, especially in the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics in analyzing students' writing. This study also provides insight into how students represent actions, feelings, thoughts, and experiences through language in recount texts. Furthermore, the results may help teachers develop more effective strategies for teaching writing and improving students' ability to construct meaningful texts.

Finally, although this study focuses on transitivity analysis in recount text writing, there are still some aspects that can be explored further in future studies, such as the relationship between transitivity and students' writing quality, the use of interpersonal and textual metafunctions, or comparative studies across different educational levels and text genres.

METHOD RESEARCH

A. Participants / subject

This study applied a descriptive qualitative method because the purpose of the research was to identify and describe the types of transitivity processes and the realization of transitivity processes found in students' recount text writing. According to John W. Creswell (2014), qualitative research is used to explore and understand social phenomena through descriptive and textual data. In this study, the researcher focused on analyzing clauses found in students' recount texts based on the transitivity system in Systemic Functional Linguistics proposed by M. A. K. Halliday and Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen.

The subjects of this study were seventh-grade students of SMP Negeri 27 Medan. The researcher selected five students from Class VII-5 as the source of data. The data of this study were students' recount texts related to personal experiences and past events. The researcher selected five recount texts because the texts contained clauses relevant to transitivity analysis and represented students' experiences in written form.

The titles of the recount texts analyzed in this study were *My Experience When Vacationing in Bandung*, *My Holiday at Grandmother's House*, *A Weekend Family Getaway to Berastagi*, *A Fun Day with My Cousins*, and *In Confusion*. These texts were considered appropriate because they contained various transitivity elements such as process, participant, and circumstance which were relevant to the objectives of this

research.

B. Instruments

The instruments used in this study were writing tasks and documentation. The writing task was used to obtain the main data in the form of students' recount texts. In this activity, students were asked to write recount texts individually based on their own personal experiences or past events. The writing task enabled the researcher to collect authentic written data produced directly by the students.

The second instrument was documentation. Documentation was used to collect, organize, and store the students' recount texts as research data. The researcher collected the students' writing assignments submitted through WhatsApp chat and documented them for analysis. In addition, the documentation technique helped support the validity of the data because the students' original writings were used directly as the source of analysis.

The researcher used the transitivity framework proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) to identify and classify the clauses found in the students' texts. The analysis focused on six types of transitivity processes, namely material process, mental process, relational process, verbal process, behavioral process, and existential process. The researcher also analyzed participant roles and circumstances found in the clauses.

C. Data analysis procedures

The data in this study were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). The analysis consisted of three steps, namely data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusion.

First, in the data condensation stage, the researcher carefully read the students' recount texts and identified the clauses found in the texts. After identifying the clauses, the researcher selected the clauses that were relevant to the objectives of the study. The clauses were then classified based on the six types of transitivity processes, namely material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential processes. In addition, the researcher identified participant roles and circumstances appearing in each clause.

Second, in the data display stage, the researcher organized the data into tables and descriptive explanations. The tables were used to present the clauses, process types, participants, and circumstances systematically. Through the data display, the researcher could clearly identify the dominant transitivity processes used in students' recount texts and describe how the processes were realized in the clauses.

Finally, in the drawing conclusion stage, the researcher interpreted the findings based on the transitivity analysis. The researcher drew conclusions regarding the types of transitivity processes used by students and explained how the processes were realized through process, participant, and circumstance elements. The conclusions were drawn based on the findings obtained from the analysis of students' recount texts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the research related to the types of transitivity processes and the realization of transitivity processes found in students' recount text writing at SMP Negeri 27 Medan. The data were obtained from five recount texts written by seventh-grade students. The researcher analyzed the clauses found in the students' recount texts based on the transitivity system proposed by M. A. K. Halliday and Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen (2014). The findings are presented in the tables and descriptions below.

1. Types of Transitivity Processes Found in Students' Recount Texts

The analysis showed that six types of transitivity processes were found in students' recount texts, namely material process, mental process, relational process, verbal process, behavioral process, and existential process. The researcher identified the process types through clauses representing actions, feelings, situations, communication, behavior, and existence in the students' writing.

a. Material Process

Material process was identified through clauses representing physical actions, activities, and events experienced by participants. The findings of material process are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Material Process Found in Students' Recount Texts

No	Clauses	Actor	Material Process	Goal
1	I went to Bandung	I	went	Bandung
2	We played together	We	played	together
3	My family visited the park	My family	visited	the park
4	We bought some souvenirs	We	bought	some souvenirs
5	I took many pictures	I	took	many pictures
6	We swam in the river	We	swam	in the river
7	I cleaned the classroom	I	cleaned	the classroom
8	My friends and I watched a movie	My friends and I	watched	a movie

Table 1 shows that students frequently used action verbs such as *went*, *played*, *visited*, *bought*, *took*, *swam*, *cleaned*, and *watched* to describe activities and events in the past. The findings indicate that material process became the dominant process used by students in recount text writing.

b. Mental Process

Mental process was identified through clauses expressing feelings, thoughts, and perceptions. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 2: Mental Process Found in Students' Recount Texts

No	Clauses	Senser	Mental Process	Phenomenon
1	I felt happy	I	felt	happy
2	I thought about my family	I	thought	my family
3	We enjoyed the holiday	We	enjoyed	the holiday

Table 2 indicates that students used mental process to express emotional responses and thoughts related to their experiences.

c. Relational Process

Relational process was identified through clauses describing situations, conditions, and characteristics. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 3: Relational Process Found in Students' Recount Texts

No	Clauses	Carrier	Relational Process	Attribute
1	The weather was sunny	The weather	was	sunny
2	The classroom was clean	The classroom	was	clean
3	The trip was exciting	The trip	was	exciting

Table 4 shows that students used relational process to describe qualities and

conditions experienced during events.

d. Verbal Process

Verbal process was identified through clauses related to speaking and communication activities. The findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 4: Verbal Process Found in Students' Recount Texts

No	Clauses	Sayer	Verbal Process	Verb
1	My teacher told us a story	My teacher	told	a story
2	My friend said hello	My friend	said	hello

The findings show that verbal process was used to represent communication activities in students' recount texts.

e. Behavioral Process

Behavioral process was identified through clauses representing physiological and psychological behavior. The findings are presented in Table 6.

Table 5: Behavioral Process Found in Students' Recount Texts

No	Clauses	Behaver	Behavioral Process
1	She laughed loudly	She	laughed
2	We smiled happily	We	smiled

The findings indicate that behavioral process was used to express emotional and physical reactions during experiences.

f. Existential Process

Existential process was identified through clauses indicating the existence of people, objects, or situations. The findings are presented in Table 7.

Table 6: Existential Process Found in Students' Recount Texts

No	Clauses	Existential Process	Existent
1	There was a big tree near the river	There was	a big tree
2	There were many visitors	There were	many visitors

Table 7 shows that existential process was used to indicate the existence of objects and situations in recount texts.

2. Realization of Transitivity Processes

The realization of transitivity processes in students' recount texts was analyzed through process, participant, and circumstance elements. The researcher found that the processes were mostly realized through verbs in simple past tense forms. Participants were commonly realized through noun groups such as *I*, *we*, *my family*, and *my friends*. Circumstances were mostly realized through adverbial groups and prepositional phrases indicating time, place, and manner.

Table 7: Realization of Transitivity Processes in Students' Recount Texts

Clause	Process	Participant	Circumstance
I went to Bandung last holiday	Material	I	last holiday
We played together at the park	Material	We	at the park
I felt very happy yesterday	Mental	I	yesterday
The weather was sunny in Bandung	Relational	The weather	in Bandung

Based on Table 7, the realization of transitivity processes in students' recount texts was represented through process, participant, and circumstance elements. The

students frequently used circumstances of time and place to support the chronological structure of recount texts.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed that six types of transitivity processes were found in students' recount text writing at SMP Negeri 27 Medan, namely material process, mental process, relational process, verbal process, behavioral process, and existential process. Among these processes, material process appeared most dominantly in the students' recount texts. This finding indicates that students mainly focused on describing physical actions, activities, and events experienced in the past. Since recount text is a genre used to retell experiences chronologically, the dominance of material process reflects the characteristics of recount text itself, which emphasizes actions and sequences of events.

The dominance of material process in this study is in line with the theory proposed by M. A. K. Halliday and Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen (2014), who explain that material process represents actions and events in the physical world. The students frequently used action verbs such as *went*, *played*, *visited*, *bought*, and *watched* to represent their experiences. These findings also support previous studies conducted by Utami, Munawwaroh, and Dinata (2022), as well as Faradina and Emilia (2024), which found that material process was the most dominant process in students' recount text writing. Therefore, the findings of this study confirm that students tend to construct recount texts through clauses representing physical experiences and activities.

In addition to material process, mental process was also found in the students' recount texts. The use of mental process indicates that students were able to express feelings, thoughts, and emotional responses related to their experiences. Clauses such as *I felt happy* and *We enjoyed the holiday* show that students not only described actions but also represented personal emotions and perceptions. This finding suggests that students attempted to make their recount texts more expressive and meaningful through emotional expressions.

Relational process was used by students to describe conditions, situations, and characteristics found in their experiences. Clauses such as *The weather was sunny* and *The trip was exciting* indicate that students used relational process to provide descriptions and additional information in their writing. Meanwhile, verbal process was used to represent communication activities through clauses such as *My teacher told us a story*. Behavioral process and existential process appeared less frequently, but they still contributed to the representation of reactions, behaviors, and existence in the recount texts.

The realization of transitivity processes in this study was represented through process, participant, and circumstance elements. The findings showed that students mostly used simple participants such as *I*, *we*, *my family*, and *my friends* because the texts focused on personal experiences. In addition, circumstances of time and place frequently appeared in the clauses, indicating that students attempted to organize events chronologically and provide clear contextual information in their recount texts. This finding is consistent with the characteristics of recount text, which commonly uses temporal sequences and past events.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics, especially transitivity analysis, in analyzing students' writing. The findings demonstrate how experiential meaning is realized through clauses in recount texts. The study also confirms that transitivity analysis can be used to identify how students represent experiences, feelings, situations, and actions through language.

Practically, the findings of this study may help English teachers understand students' writing characteristics and difficulties in constructing recount texts. Through transitivity analysis, teachers can identify whether students are able to represent experiences clearly and systematically in writing. The findings also suggest that teachers need to encourage students to use more varied process types in order to make their writing richer and more meaningful. In addition, teachers can apply Systemic Functional Linguistics as an approach to improve students' awareness of meaning construction in writing activities.

Although this study has provided important findings related to transitivity analysis in students' recount texts, some limitations still remain. This study only focused on five recount texts written by seventh-grade students and analyzed ideational meaning through transitivity system. Therefore, further studies are recommended to analyze larger data, different genres of text, or other metafunctions in Systemic Functional Linguistics, such as interpersonal and textual metafunctions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the students used six types of transitivity processes in writing recount texts, namely material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential processes. Material process was the most frequently used because the students mostly described physical activities and past experiences in their writing. The findings also showed that the students were able to represent their experiences through process, participant, and circumstance elements, although most of the texts still used simple sentence patterns and limited variations of vocabulary. Through this study, transitivity analysis can help teachers understand how students express meaning and organize experiences in recount text writing.

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