

## Exploring Types of Transitivity Processes in Eighth Grade Students' Recount Text

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### Abstrak

Transitivitas dalam Linguistik Fungsional Sistemik merupakan suatu cara untuk menganalisis bagaimana tindakan, perasaan, dan hubungan dijelaskan dalam kalimat. Transitivitas melibatkan proses yang terkait dengan kata kerja (misalnya material, relasional, mental, eksistensial, verbal, dan perilaku); partisipan yang terlibat dalam proses (misalnya aktor, tujuan, penerima, dll.); dan keadaan yang merupakan informasi tambahan (misalnya waktu, tempat, cara, dll.). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui proses transitivitas yang paling sering digunakan dalam teks recount yang ditulis oleh siswa kelas delapan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif. Peneliti memperoleh data sebanyak 150 klausa dari teks recount siswa kelas delapan untuk dianalisis. Data tersebut dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis kode tematik. Dalam menganalisis data, peneliti menggunakan Teori Transitivitas SFL Halliday. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa sebagian besar siswa sering menggunakan proses material dalam teks recount mereka, yang menunjukkan kepercayaan diri dalam menulis kalimat deklaratif dengan kata kerja aktif. Penggunaan material process yang dominan mencerminkan preferensi mereka untuk menyatakan tindakan atau kejadian secara langsung dan jelas. Hanya sedikit siswa yang menggunakan proses mental dan relasional, dan bahkan lebih sedikit lagi yang menggunakan proses eksistensial, verbal, dan perilaku.

**Kata Kunci:** linguistik fungsional sistemik, transitivitas, teks recount

### Abstract

Transitivity in Systemic Functional Linguistics is a way to analyze how actions, feelings, and relationships are described in clauses. Transitivity involves processes related to verbs (e.g. material, relational, mental, existential, verbal, and behavioral); participants involved in the process (e.g. actor, goal, recipient, etc.); and circumstances that are additional information (e.g. time, place, manner, etc.). This study aims to determine the most common used transitivity processes types in recount texts written by eighth grade students. This study used a qualitative research method. The researcher obtained data of 150 clauses from eighth grade students' recount texts for analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic code analysis techniques. In analyzing the data, the researcher used Halliday's SFL Transitivity Theory. This study found that most students often used material processes in their recount texts, which showed their confidence in writing declarative sentences with active verbs. The dominant use of material processes reflects their preference for stating actions or events directly and clearly. Only a few students used mental and relational processes, and even fewer used existential, verbal, and behavioral processes.

**Keywords:** systemic functional linguistics, transitivity, recount text

## INTRODUCTION

Language was utilized for communication in an everyday setting, both in spoken and written. According to Fauziati (2015), language serves as a tool for communication and has meaning in human articulation. The Indonesian government has made English a required language in the 2013 curriculum to facilitate students to interact with international world (Isadaud et al., 2022). Teachers need to understand systemic functional linguistics (SFL) during teaching and learning. It is believed that SFL can help teach more effectively. Troyan et al (2019) stated that SFL can provide teachers with a flexible knowledge base that will enable their students to comprehend how the elements

of a given oral or written genre function together to express meaning.

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is a linguistic approach that studies the relationship between language and its communicative function in a social context. SFL studies help us understand how language is used to make meaning in various social contexts. SFL provides insights into how language works in real-world communication. SFL has been utilized as a foundation for pedagogical research in schools, particularly in writing classes (Yusuf & Rofiatati, 2024). Studying how children acquire language, analyzing language as a system, explaining language as a social semiotic, and understanding language acquisition as a process of semiotic mediation are some

ways that SFL has influenced education (Mickan, 2023). According to Cakrawati (2018), SFL has three types of metafunction. They are interpersonal, textual, and ideational (experiential). Metafunction refers to three functions or perspectives that explain how languages are used for communication purposes. According to Matthiessen et al (2014), ideational metafunction views clauses as representations. Ideational is a language function used to express or interpret experience through transitivity.

Transitivity was popular by British linguist Michael Halliday. Based on Halliday's theory, transitivity refers to how clauses represent different types of processes, participants involved in the processes, and circumstances that show situations and conditions of that process. It examines the structure of clauses in terms of three main components: processes, participants, and circumstances. Subsequently, transitivity is separated into six processes: material, verbal, behavioral, mental, relational, and existential. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) transitivity analysis is a framework used to analyze how language represents processes, participants, and circumstances.

After a few years, text analysis using the Theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) became the primary focus of various research projects in the fields of academic and applied linguistics. Several investigations have been conducted to examine how SFL can be applied to analyze academic, professional, and scholarly texts, resulting in a better understanding of the structure and function of language in the relevant context (Amartya et al., 2022; Mangana & Kurniawan, 2020; Yulianawati & Anggrarini, 2022). These studies have contributed to the development of the theory and practice of text analysis and have helped identify complex linguistic patterns in a variety of text genres at a higher level. However, although there has been a lot of research conducted at higher levels, there is little research that specifically analyzes literary genres in junior high school. According to the 2013 curriculum in Indonesia, the English functional texts studied by junior high school students are descriptive, recount, narrative, report, and procedure. In this study, the researcher focused on recount text because recount texts typically involve telling personal experiences or events, which can be inherently engaging for students.

Analyzing students' recount texts using SFL transitivity allows teachers to assess students' ability to connect their personal experiences with their writing. Besides, teachers can assess the student's ability to sequence events, develop characters, convey emotions, and maintain coherence—a set of skills that are crucial for effective communication in both academic and real-world contexts. Therefore, the researcher is interested in

analyzing the 8th-grade students' recount text in SMP Negeri 16 Surabaya using Halliday's theory of SFL transitivity.

## METHODS

This research used qualitative method. Using qualitative methods, the researcher can analyze texts clearly and concisely, covering many data sources, and identifying and explaining patterns of language use. The participants in this research were 30 students from eighth grade at SMP Negeri 16 Surabaya. The data was collected through some steps. First, asking the students to write recount text. Second, collecting students' recount text. Third, Reading and then breaking down the students' recount text into the clauses and also reducing unnecessary data. Then, identifying the clauses based on transitivity process (process, participants, and circumstances) into the table of transitivity. Next, counting the process, participants, and circumstances used in the students' recount text. Finally, determining which processes types are frequently used by the students.

The researcher used a thematic coding technique in analyzing data because it focuses on identifying patterns of language use (the use of transitivity) discovered in students' recount text. Thematic coding is a qualitative analysis technique used to analyze and present patterns in data. According to Fauzi et al (2024), thematic coding analysis is a method for methodically organizing data from qualitative research, with an emphasis on identifying relevant and meaningful themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, as cited in Fauzi et al., 2024). Consequently, the researcher understood how the students created recount text and the transitivity system used in their writing. To identify, the researcher labeled or coded the texts or sentences into certain categories to understand the meaning and relationships in the text. In this case, the researcher provided the transitivity label, namely processes, participants, and circumstances. To identify the processes, participants, and circumstances, the researcher put them on the tables.

**Table 1 Transitivity Label**

We	arrived	at midnight.
<b>actor</b>	<b>material</b>	<b>circumstance time</b>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are 150 clauses analyzed in this research. The researcher discovered six transitivity processes after examining all the data from the students' recount texts. These processes are the material process, mental process, relational process, existential process, verbal process, and behavioral process. The result shows that the most

common type of processes employed in students' recount texts is the material process. This indicates that practically all of the recount texts written by students discuss action, activity, or physical events.

Material process is related to action verbs, while the mental process is related to senses such as feeling, thinking, seeing, etc. The behavioral process refers to the expression of both psychological and physical activity through behavior. The verbal process presents the meaning of saying, whereas the existential process conveys the meaning of existence. The relational process has the meaning of being. The distribution of the processes types of transitivity analysis characterized in the students' recount text can be seen in the table below:

**Table 2. Process Types of Transitivity Analysis in Students' Recount Text**

Process	Frequency of occurrences
Material	92
Mental	33
Relational	17
Existential	4
Verbal	3
Behavioral	1
Total	150

From the table above, the most common type of processes employed in students' recount texts is the material process. This indicates that practically all of the recount texts written by students discuss action, activity, or physical events. Some students used mental process to express their thoughts or feelings about what happened in their story. Then, the third position is relational process. Students did not use relational processes much because students rarely think more deeply about the relationships between objects in the story, but rather explain what happened in the story which has carried out by the participants. The students did not often use existential process because recount text focuses on the sequence of events rather than the existence of something. Students did not use verbal process much because recount text is more about physical events than conversation. The students rarely used behavioral process because students prefer to tell what happened rather than movements or behavior.

### Material process

**Table 3 Recount Text of Student 6**

We	departed	early in the morning.
actor	material process	Circumstance time

The verb "departed" is a material process, this word describes the physical act of leaving a place. In the sentence "We departed early in the morning," the participant "We" functions as the "actor" who carried out the action (departed). The use of "actor" like this helps clarify who is involved in the events being told, thereby providing details that are important for readers to understand the story as a whole. This reveals that the use of "actor" in transitivity is one way to fulfill the language characteristics of recount texts, namely the mention of specific participants involved in past experiences or events. The phrase "early in the morning" is the circumstance that provides the information about the time.

### Mental process

**Table 4 Recount Text of Student 8**

During the trip,	I	often	saw	animals passing by such as cats, dogs, and even monkeys.
circumstance time	sen ser		mental process	circumstance phenomenon

The verb "saw" indicates a mental process of perception that involves sensing or observing. The word "I" as the participant called senser who did the observation. While, the phrase "animals passing by such as cats, dogs, and even monkeys" is a phenomenon that observed by the senser. The phrase "during the trip" is the circumstance that shows the time of the process occurred.

### Relational Process

**Table 5 Recount Text of Student 3**

This school holiday	is	truly unforgettable.
carrier	relational: intensive process	attribute

The phrase "this school holiday" is the carrier. The carrier is the participant or subject in the relational process. The phrase "truly unforgettable" is an attribute. It describes the condition of the subject. The verb "is" indicates a relational-intensive process that links "this school holiday" to "truly unforgettable".

### Existential Process

**Table 6 Recount Text of Student 16**

There	are	lots of animals.
	existential process	existent

**Table 7 Recount Text of Student 19**

There	are	3 Pedharman, namely Pande, Pasek, and Arya.
	<b>existential process</b>	<b>existent</b>

The word "are" in the sentences of student 16 and student 19 indicates an existential process that shows the existence of something. The phrase "many animals" in student 16's sentence and the phrase "3 Pedharman namely Pande, Pasek, and Arya" in student 19's sentence are the entity whose existence is stated. This is called existent. The word "there" indicates the location of the existence.

#### Verbal process

**Table 8 Recount Text of Student 9**

My mother and father	said	that my fried rice was tasty.
<b>sayer</b>	<b>verbal process</b>	<b>verbiage</b>

The phrase "my mother and father" is the participant who is doing the saying. It is called a sayer. The verb "said" is considered as a verbal process. The phrase "that my fried rice was tasty" is verbiage that indicates the content spoken by the sayer.

According to the findings, the transitivity process that students mostly use in their recount text is the material process. The fact that students employed material process in their recount text can be interpreted that they tend to focus on the context of physical actions, events, or experiences. Material process involve activities carried out by the participant (actor), which indicates that the students tend to write about what happens concretely in their experiences. For example, if a student is writing about a holiday experience, she or he will use a lot of material process such as "visited," "went," "arrived," or "walked" all of which are concrete actions. This is following one of the language features of recount text, namely the use of action verbs. This is certainly in line with the use of specific participants and the circumstances to describe their experience. The students writing result shows that they have used specific participants and circumstances. For example in the clause: "After a long journey, we finally arrived at the bustling beach". This is good because they tell what happened, who was involved, where it happened, when it happened. However, it would be even better if students used various processes types and various circumstances. In addition, this finding was in line with the previous research conducted by Yulianawati & Anggrarini (2022) and Fitriana (2021) who found that the material process was used dominant by the students. The students mostly use material processes to express an action or

describe the activity that is carried out by the participant. The participant that mostly used by the students is actor.

#### CONCLUSION

After conducting the research of "Systemic Functional Linguistics Analysis of Eighth Grade Students' Recount Text", the researcher can conclude based on the findings discussed in the previous chapter. The transitivity process that is most common used in students' recount text is a material process. This shows that students more often describe real and concrete actions in their recount texts. Researcher limits their focus to find out the most common processes types (material process, relational process, mental process, existential process, verbal process, and behavioral process) used by the students in their writing.

Recommendation for future research to compare the use of transitivity processes in different types of texts to see whether the dominance of this material process is unique to recount texts or applies generally. Suggestions for future research analyze more deeply about the use of processes, participants, and circumstances in students' recount text. For English teachers, it suggests to use various teaching methods in teaching recount text so that the students can employ different types of processes including many types of participants and circumstances in their writing.

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