

## **ANALYZING CLAUSE BY HALLIDAY'S TRANSITIVITY SYSTEM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper is entitled "**Analyzing Clause by Halliday's Transitivity System**". The purpose of the paper is to acquire a clear description of the transitivity system that functions as one of the clause analysis methods in an ideational function of language.

Halliday's transitivity system is a system that develops old conception about transitivity, so whether a verb takes or does not take a direct object is not a prime consideration. There are three components of what Halliday calls a "transitivity process", namely: *the process* itself, *participants* in the process, and *circumstances* associated with the process. Then, Halliday also divides the system of transitivity or process types into six processes, namely: material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential.

The analysis will be performed in accordance with the theories put forward by M.A.K Halliday in some of his books, especially *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. The result of the paper shows that the transitivity system can analyze clauses effectively, and also the system can solve the problem of reference personal in contexts of potential ambiguity.

## I. BACKGROUND

According to Halliday (1985a), there are three major functions of language, namely: the ideational, the textual, and the interpersonal. The ideational function is the use of language to express content and to communicate information. Where content is the focus, the emphasis will be on transferring information clearly and effectively so that it can be comprehended quickly and easily. The ideational function involves two main systems, namely: transitivity and ergativity.

The other two functions of language are the textual and the interpersonal. The textual function is the use of language to signify discourse. Here, language becomes text, is related to itself and to its contexts of use, including the preceding and following text, and the context of situation. The textual can be classified into two structures, namely: thematic structure (theme and rheme) and Information structure (NEW and GIVEN). The interpersonal function is the use of language to establish and maintain social relations. This function involves modalities so that it is related to modus system. The system is signified by two main elements, namely: mood and residue. In this paper, however the writer will analyze about the transitivity, so only about the transitivity that can be explained more detail.

Traditionally, transitivity is normally understood as the grammatical feature, which indicates if a verb takes a direct object; and we know some of the terms below:

- a. If the verb takes a direct object, then it is described as transitive, and
- b. It is called intransitive if it does not;
- c. An extension of this concept is the ditransitive verb, which takes both a direct and an indirect object.

Halliday, however, found the new concept of transitivity. The new concept represents a further development of the old concept. In Halliday's conception in his *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, whether a verb takes or does not take a direct object is not a prime consideration. There are three components of what Halliday calls a "transitivity process", namely:

- a. *The process* itself,
- b. *Participants* in the process; and

c. *Circumstances* associated with the process

Then, Halliday divides the system of transitivity or process types into six processes, namely: material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential.

In connection with the transitivity, let us see the definition of clause below:

“A clause in English is the simultaneous realization of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings.” (Halliday, 1981: 42)

“A clause is the product of three simultaneous semantic processes. It is at one and the same time a representation of experience (ideational), an interactive exchange (interpersonal), and a message (textual) (Halliday, 1985: 53)

From the quotations above, we can conclude that a clause has a close relation to the ideational (both of the function and the meaning), so that absolutely a clause also can be related to the transitivity. The relation in here is we can analyze a clause by the transitivity system or what Halliday calls as analyzing the meaning of clause as representation.

## **II. THEORETICAL REVIEW**

According to Halliday (1985a), if we talk about grammar in English, there are three kinds of grammar, namely: ‘theme is the grammar of discourse’, and ‘mood is the grammar of speech function’, then ‘transitivity is the grammar of experience.’ Halliday (1981) also defines transitivity as ‘the grammar of the clause’ as ‘a structural unit’ for ‘expressing a particular range of ideational meanings’. Halliday also tells that :

This domain is ‘the cornerstone of the semantic organization of experience’; it subsumes ‘all participant functions’ and ‘all experiential functions relevant to the syntax of the clause’ (Halliday, 1981: 134)

From the quotation above, it is clearly that a clause can be analyzed by the transitivity. The transitivity can make a clause more

understandable because the reader will know the specific process in the clause.

In the transitivity system, there are six types of process, namely: *material*, *mental*, *relational*, *verbal*, *existential*, and *behavioral*. We can see the processes at the table below:

Process type	Category Meaning	Participants
material: action event	'doing' 'doing' 'happening'	Actor, Goal
behavioral	'behaving'	Behaver
mental: perception affection cognition	'sensing' 'seeing' 'feeling' 'thinking'	Senser, Phenomenon
Verbal	'saying'	Sayer, Target
relational: attribution identification	'being' 'attributing' 'identifying'	Token, Value Carrier, Attribute Identified, Identifier
Existential	'existing'	Existent

(Halliday, 1985: 131)

Next explanation is more detail explanation about the transitivity from the book '*An Introduction to Functional Grammar*' in chapter 5, Halliday (1985b):

### A. Material Processes: processes of doing

Material processes are processes of 'doing'. They express the notion that some entity 'does' something – which may be done 'to' some other entity. In the material processes, there are two participants role, namely: actor and goal, for example:

The lion	caught	the tourist
Actor	Process	Goal

### B. Mental Processes: processes of sensing

1. Perception (seeing, hearing, etc.)
2. Affection (liking, fearing, etc.)
3. Cognition (thinking, knowing, understanding, etc.)

In the mental processes, there are two participants, namely: senser (the conscious being that is feeling, thinking, or seeing) and phenomenon (which is 'sensed' – felt, thought or seen). Let's see the example below:

I	believe	you
Senser	Process: cognition	Phenomenon

### C. Relational processes: processes of being

There are three types of relational process in the clause, namely:

1. Intensive 'x is a' (establishes a relationship of *sameness* between two entities)
2. Circumstantial 'x is at a' (defines the entity in terms of *location, time, manner*)
3. Possessive 'x has a' (indicates that one entity *owns* another)

Each of these comes in two modes:

Attributive ('a is an attribute of x')

In this mode, there are two participants, namely: carrier and attribute. Identifying ('a is the identity of x')

In this mode, there are two participants, namely: identified and identifier.

The six possible classifications of relational processes in terms of modes and types are given below:

mode type	(i) attributive	(ii) identifying
(1) intensive	the performance is great	Mr Nathan is the President the President is Mr Nathan

<b>(2) circumstantial</b>	the lecture is on a Wednesday	today is the eighteenth; the eighteenth is today
<b>(3) possessive</b>	John has two motorcycles	the two motorcycles are John's John's are the two motorcycles

Further examples of the relational process modes and their types are given in tables below:

**Table of Attributive Clauses**

<b>attribute of:</b>			
<b>quality (intensive)</b>	John	is / looks	great
<b>circumstance (circumstantial)</b>	Prof Halliday the celebrations	was last	in the lecture theatre all day
<b>possession (possessive)</b>	the computer Ahmad	is / belongs has	Ahmad's / to Ahmad a computer
	<b>Carrier</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Attribute</b>

**Table of Identifying Clauses**

<b>identification by:</b>			
<b>token-value (intensive)</b>	Ah Chong David Garrick	is played	the teacher Hamlet
<b>circumstance (circumstantial)</b>	yesterday his gold	was takes up	the twentieth the entire box
<b>possession (possessive)</b>	the piano Peter	is owns	Peter's the piano
	<b>Identified</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Identifier</b>

#### D. Behavioral processes

It should be mentioned here that behavioral processes stand between material and mental processes. Partly as a result of this, some of us may find it difficult to distinguish

- between behavioral process verbs and material process verbs

- on the one hand,
- between behavioral process verbs and mental process verbs on the other.

As a rule of thumb, a behavioral process verb is

- a. Intransitive (it has only one *participant*) and
- b. Indicates an activity in which both the physical and mental aspects are inseparable and indispensable to it.

In this process, there is only one participant, namely: behavior (the agent who behaves), example:

Buff	neither laughs nor smiles
behavior	process

### E. Verbal processes

These are processes of saying. The participants of the processes are: sayer (participant who speaks), receiver (the one to whom the verbalization is addressed), verbiage (a name for the verbalization itself). There is however one other type of verbal process, in which the sayer is in sense acting verbally on another direct participant, with verbs such as: *insult*, *praise*, *slander*, *abuse*, and *flatter*. This other participant will be referred to as the target. For example:

They	asked	him	a lot of question
Sayer	Process: verbal	Receiver	Verbiage

And also the example for Target:

I	'm always praising	you	to my friends
Sayer	Process: verbal	Target	Recipient

### F. Existential processes

These processes represent that something exists or happens. These clauses typically have the verb *be*, or some other verb

expressing *existence*, such as *exist*, *arise*, followed by a nominal group functioning as Existent (a thing which exists in the process). The existent may be a phenomenon of any kind, and is often, in fact, an event. For example:

There	was	a storm
	Process	Existent: event

**G. Other participant functions**

There are two other participant functions in the English clause, namely: Beneficiary and Range. Beneficiary is the one to whom or for whom the process is said to take place. It appears in material and verbal process. Let's see the table below :

Process	Beneficiary function	Example (the underlined words)
Material	a) The recipient, is one that goods are given to. b) The client, is one that services is done for	a) I gave <u>my love</u> a ring b) Fred bought a present <u>for his wife</u>
Verbal	The one who is being addressed	John said to <u>Marry</u>

On the other hand, range is the element that specifies the range or scope of the process. A range may occur in material, and verbal processes.

Process	Range function	Example (the underlined words)
Material	a) Expresses the domain over which the process takes place b) Expresses the process itself	a) Ray climbed <u>the mountain</u> b) Fred played <u>the piano</u> .
Verbal	The element expressing the class, quality, or quantity what is said	He made <u>a long speech</u>



### H. Circumstantial elements

To know more clearly about the elements, let's see the table of examples below:

#### Types of circumstantial element

	Type	Categories	Example (the underlined words)
1	Extent	a) Distant b) Duration	a) He walks <u>(for) seven miles</u> b) She stayed <u>for two hours</u>
2	Location	a) Place b) Time	a) We work <u>in the kitchen</u> b) I get up <u>at six o'clock</u>
3	Manner	a) Means b) Quality c) Comparison	a) My mother went <u>by bus</u> b) It was snowing <u>heavily.</u> c) It went through my head <u>like an earthquake</u>
4	Cause	a) Reason b) Purpose c) Behalf	a) <u>For want of</u> a nail the shoe was lost b) <u>For the sake of</u> peace.. c) I'm writing <u>on behalf of</u> Aunt Jane
5	Accomp animent	a) Comitative b) Additive	a) Fred came <u>with Tom</u> b) Fred came <u>instead of Tom</u>
6	Matter		I worry <u>about her health</u>
7	Role		I'm speaking <u>as your employer</u>

### III. DISCUSSION

From the explanation above, the writer is more convinced that the transitivity system can effectively analyze clauses. The fact also can be supported by the quotations below:

“‘Clause’ rather than ‘word’ or ‘sentence’ is the unit of analysis in Systemic Functional Language (SFL). And the function of a clause is analyzed in terms of: (a) Subject, Finite,

Predicator, Complement, and Adjunct (SFPCA), (b) Theme and Rheme; (c) Given and New, and (d) Process and Participant or transitivity system. SFPCA captures syntactic niceties of the text. Theme-Rheme and Given-New indices deal with the way a text is packaged and the way information in a text is structured in a clause. However, a Process and Participant analysis of text reveals the way language users manipulate language to represent their perceptions of reality" (Bloor & Bloor, 1995, pp. 107-109).

From the quotation, it is clearly said that the only one unit of analysis in the transitivity system is clause. The transitivity system is also can help the users of language to express their experience, or what Bloor and Bloor call as represent their perceptions of reality.

Furthermore, the writer will explain some excellences of analyzing clause by the transitivity system. For the first excellence, let us see some quotations below:

"A fundamental property of language is that it enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of their experience of what goes on around them and inside them. Here again the clause is the most significant grammatical unit, in this case because it is the clause that functions as the representation of processes" (Halliday, 1985b: 101)

"Transitivity specifies the different types of process that are recognized in the language, and the structures by which they are expressed." (Halliday, 1985b: 101)

From the quotations above we can conclude that with analyzing clause by transitivity system we can know exactly all the processes in a language; and also we can know exactly how human beings state their experience in the world. For more detail explanation, let us see some examples below:

a) Material process

“Tom and Jim went up the hill to fetch a pail of water”

Tom and Jim	went	up the hill	to fetch	a pail of water
Actor	Process: material	circumstance	Process: material	Goal

b) Mental process and Verbal process

“Jim said he reckoned I would believe him next time”

Jim	said	he	reckoned
Sayer	Process: verbal	Senser	Process: cognition

I	would	believe	him	next time
Senser	Process: cognition		Phenomenon	Circumstantial : extent

The examples above show that we can know the process exactly through the transitivity system. As the explanation before, we know that the transitivity system divides processes into six, namely: *material, mental, relational, verbal, existential, and behavioral*.

The last excellence is by transitivity system we can also analyze reference case. As we know that reference is a part of grammatical cohesion. Let us see a quotation below:

“The question of the interpretation of reference items in contexts of potential ambiguity has also begun to be studied. Here the question is, how does the listener or reader identify which of two or more possible items in the text a reference item refers to. For example if we come across a sentence, such as:

‘Spurs played Liverpool. They beat them.’ How do we know who beat who? (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 310)

From the quotation above, we know that there is a case of personal reference in contexts of potential ambiguity. Halliday and Hasan

(1976) tells that the case can be solved by the transitivity system, just like the analysis below:

1. Spurs played Liverpool. They beat them

Spurs	played	Liverpool
Actor	Process: material	Goal

They	beat	them
Actor	Process: material	Goal

2. The cops chased the robbers. They caught them

The cops	chased	the robbers
Actor	Process: material	Goal

They	caught	them
Actor	Process: material	Goal

From the analysis, we can see that the case can be solved; and after the case is analyzed by transitivity we exactly know who refers to whom. We, however have to more be careful of this case, because a reference case is a semantic relation case. Thus, we also need to analyze the meaning first.

From the discussion above, we can see some evidences that the transitivity system is a way to analyze clause effectively.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

From all the parts above the writer can take some conclusions that :

1. The transitivity system can analyze clause effectively. The transitivity also helps us recognize and encode our experiences of the world.
2. The transitivity system specifies the different types of process that are recognized in the language, and the structures by which they are expressed. In transitivity system, there are six processes, namely: *material, mental, relational, verbal, existential, and behavioral*.
3. The transitivity system also can solve the case of personal reference in contexts of potential ambiguity.

## **V. REFERENCES**

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