

## ***Analyzing Lexico-Grammar in EFL Learners' Argumentative Essays Using the Transitivity System***

### **Analisis Leksiko-Gramatika dalam Esai Argumentatif Pembelajar EFL dengan Menggunakan Sistem Transitivitas**

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**Abstract:** *This study aims to examine the lexico-grammatical choices in an EFL learner's argumentative essay using the transitivity system. It seeks to assess the quality of the learner's writing to help improve their writing ability. The study also explores the experiential meaning constructed by the learner to persuade the reader through her argumentative text. In terms of methodology, this research employs document analysis to investigate the transitivity system. The data is from an argumentative essay written by an EFL learner at a state university in Cirebon. A qualitative approach is used, specifically textual analysis, a data analysis method that closely examines texts' content, meaning, structure, and discourse. The result shows that the material process takes over half of the portions of all process types. It indicates that the EFL Learner only serves a few arguments in the text. Thus, the argumentative essay text written by EFL learners has not fulfilled the standard quality of writing an argumentative essay. It is clearly shown from the result of finding process types, which should be mental and verbal processes as the highest portions in the text. This study contributes to the understanding of how transitivity analysis can reveal the strengths and weaknesses in EFL learners' argumentative writing, with implications for developing more targeted pedagogical strategies to enhance students' ability to construct effective arguments.*

**Keywords:** *Lexico-Grammar, Transitivity System, EFL Learners, Argumentative Essays, Textual Analysis*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji pilihan leksiko-gramatikal dalam esai argumentatif pembelajar EFL menggunakan sistem transitivitas. Penelitian ini berupaya menilai kualitas tulisan pembelajar untuk membantu meningkatkan kemampuan menulis mereka. Penelitian ini juga mengeksplorasi makna pengalaman yang dibangun oleh pembelajar untuk membujuk pembaca melalui teks argumentatifnya. Dari segi metodologi, penelitian ini menggunakan analisis dokumen untuk menyelidiki sistem transitivitas. Data berasal dari esai argumentatif yang ditulis oleh pembelajar EFL di sebuah universitas negeri di Cirebon. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan, khususnya analisis tekstual, metode analisis data yang meneliti konten, makna, struktur, dan wacana teks secara cermat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa proses material mengambil alih setengah dari semua jenis proses. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa Pembelajar EFL hanya menyajikan beberapa argumen dalam teks. Dengan demikian, teks esai argumentatif yang ditulis oleh pembelajar EFL belum memenuhi standar kualitas penulisan esai argumentatif. Hal ini terlihat jelas dari hasil pencarian jenis proses, yang seharusnya proses mental dan verbal menempati posisi paling atas di dalam teks. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi pada pemahaman tentang bagaimana analisis transitivitas dapat mengungkap kekuatan dan kelemahan dalam tulisan argumentatif pelajar EFL, dengan implikasi untuk mengembangkan strategi pedagogis yang lebih terarah untuk meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam membangun argumen yang efektif.

**Keywords:** Leksiko-Gramatikal, Sistem Transitivitas, Pembelajar EFL, Esai Argumentatif, Analisis Tekstual

## A. INTRODUCTION

In an era of globalization and rapid information exchange, the ability to communicate in English has become an essential skill, particularly among students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts<sup>1</sup>. Although English language instruction has become an integral part of the curriculum in many countries<sup>2</sup>, a significant gap remains between learners' mastery of vocabulary (lexis) and grammar with their ability to write effectively in argumentative form<sup>3</sup>. One of the most prominent challenges lies in how EFL students convey their ideas logically and coherently through writing, especially in argumentative essays that demand structural accuracy and clarity of meaning.

This phenomenon calls for a more in-depth analytical approach to students' written language, one that goes beyond conventional grammar and focuses on the functional meaning of language. In this context, the transitivity system, an analytical framework within Systemic Functional Linguistics, offers a valuable lens through which to explore how learners construct meaning through lexico-grammatical choices<sup>4</sup>. By examining how processes, participants, and circumstances are used in students' texts, educators and researchers can gain deeper insights into the development of learners' critical thinking and argumentative skills in English. This study thus becomes highly relevant in efforts to enhance the quality of academic writing instruction in EFL education.

This study aims to explore how the transitivity systems that are used by EFL Learner's writing in argumentative essay text. Regarding with transitivity system, this study principally refers to the theories of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) which developed Halliday who focused on *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. It is the way of describing lexical and grammatical choices from the system of wording. It also deals with the awareness of how language is used to realize meaning, whether in spoken or written language<sup>5</sup>.

In this case, written language is chosen as the main topic to know the quality of EFL Learner's writing by using Transitivity System. The terms of written language themselves is the way to communicate message written by someone through many kinds of text. It is not all

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<sup>1</sup> M A A Mohammed, 'English Language and Globalization', *Intl J of Novel Research in Education and Learning* 7, no. 1 (2020): 5–11; Fariba Chamani, 'Alternative Futures of English Language Education in Iran in the Era of Globalization', *Linguistics and Education* 73 (February 2023): 101146, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2023.101146>.

<sup>2</sup> Jack C Richards and Jack Pun, 'A Typology of English-Medium Instruction', *RELC Journal* 54, no. 1 (8 April 2023): 216–40, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688220968584>; Dzulkifli Isadaud, M.Dzikrul Fikri, and Muhammad Imam Bukhari, 'The Urgency Of English In The Curriculum In Indonesia To Prepare Human Resources For Global Competitiveness', *DIAJAR: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 1, no. 1 (20 January 2022): 51–58, <https://doi.org/10.54259/diajar.v1i1.177>; Istichomah Istichomah, Tukimin Bin Sansuwito, and Benri Situmorang, 'Bibliometric Study on Digital Education of Knowledge and Skill Using VOS Viewer', *International Journal of Educational Qualitative Quantitative Research* 3, no. 1 (31 July 2024): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.58418/ijeqq.v3i1.58>.

<sup>3</sup> Dariush Aliakbari, Morteza Aslrasouli, and Davud Kuhi, 'Mediating EFL Learners' Overall and Lexical Writing Skills in English Classrooms: The Case of Receptive and Productive Types of Vocabulary Testing', *Journal of New Trends in English Language Learning (JNTELL)* 3, no. 1 (2024): 33–51.

<sup>4</sup> Hieronimus Canggung Darong and Maksimus Regus, 'Unpacking Linguistic Features in EFL Textbooks Using Systemic Functional Linguistics: Transitivity, Mood, and Nominal Group Structure Analysis', *East European Journal of Psycholinguistics* 11, no. 2 (30 December 2024), <https://doi.org/10.29038/eejpl.2024.11.2.dar>; Ana Llinares and Anne McCabe, 'Systemic Functional Linguistics: The Perfect Match for Content and Language Integrated Learning', *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 26, no. 3 (16 March 2023): 245–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2019.1635985>.

<sup>5</sup> Nigel A Caplan, 'The Grammar Choices That Matter in Academic Writing', in *Handbook of Practical Second Language Teaching and Learning* (Routledge, 2022), 466–79.

about how we construct word by word into some paragraphs, but there would be negotiation meanings between writer and reader. Thus, the implementation of meaning that is built by writers would be received by reader successfully, if they have well-organized structure of writing itself. Writing is a non-linear generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning<sup>6</sup>.

Therefore, regarding with meaning construction, when learners write many kinds of text, it means that automatically they construct meaning through lexis-grammar choices. Those are defined as transitivity system as the experiential meaning construction. Transitivity is a system to do with the content that is expressed in language<sup>7</sup>. That is in all being, sensing, doing activities that happen in the spoken or written language.

Dealing with the importance of analyzing transitivity system, especially in academic writing, the transitivity system has some benefits to increase the writing ability. One of the most is we could know the quality of EFL Learner's writing<sup>8</sup>. For instance, in argumentative essay, usually, it should be mental and verbal processes which often show in that text to convince the readers. Points out that mental and verbal are two process types usually used in argument text<sup>9</sup>. Hence, unfortunately, if the writers do not use those kinds of process, they do not successful to make a good quality of their writing.

Moreover, convincing the reader through written text is one of the challenging activities in academic writing<sup>10</sup>. So that, analyzing transitivity system becomes interesting, even, it is quite important for some researchers to know the process of being, sensing or doing in written language itself. Hence, this study answers the questions about what process types of transitivity elements are produced by EFL Learner in Argumentative essay text.

Regarding with the process types of transitivity, nowadays, it becomes the interesting one in area of research. Many researchers conduct a research in a core of Systemic Functional Linguistics that concerns in transitivity system. Such as, Research about transitivity system in English text book entitled "Bahasa Inggris When English Rings the Bell"<sup>11</sup>. The study was aimed to describe and explain the linguistic competence revealed in the textbook. Then the findings of her research is Relational process has the highest percentages among other types of process. Thus, the participants named Carrier, Attribute, Identified, and Identifier are often used by the writer. Based on her analysis, she concludes that the genre refers to descriptive texts and the texts in the textbook have appropriately maintained the competencies stated in the recent Curriculum.

<sup>6</sup> M P Shabitha and S Mekala, 'Impact of Integrated Writing Tasks on Thinking and Writing Skills of Indian ESL Learners', *Journal of Applied Learning and Teaching* 6, no. 1 (2023): 198–208.

<sup>7</sup> Erni Hastuti, Apriliasih Setiawati, and Teddy Oswari, 'Transitivity Analysis of Lydia Machova's Speech in Ted Talks: A Systemic Functional Linguistics Study', *Journal of Language and Literature* 9, no. 1 (2021): 12–25.

<sup>8</sup> Lulu Farhan et al., 'Reading Passages and Conversation Text in EFL Textbook for Junior High School: Analysis on the Process of Transitivity System', *Journal of Applied Studies in Language* 7, no. 1 (26 July 2023): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.31940/jasl.v7i1.1-7>.

<sup>9</sup> Febbiyo Fajria Salsa and Edwar Kemal, 'Penggunaan Transitivity System Dalam Argumentative Paragraph Siswa', *EduCurio: Education Curiosity* 1, no. 2 (2023): 353–59.

<sup>10</sup> Linda H.F. Lin and Bruce Morrison, 'Challenges in Academic Writing: Perspectives of Engineering Faculty and L2 Postgraduate Research Students', *English for Specific Purposes* 63 (July 2021): 59–70, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2021.03.004>.

<sup>11</sup> Ritanti Lasmita, Safnil Arsyad, and Alamsyah Harahap, 'Cultural Content Analysis of English Textbooks for Junior High School Entitled "Bahasa Inggris When English Rings A Bell"', *Journal of English for Specific Purposes in Indonesia* 3, no. 1 (31 January 2024): 64–73, <https://doi.org/10.33369/espindonesia.v3i1.25902>.

Thus, Emilia<sup>12</sup> was conducted research about “Analyzing Students’ Critical Thinking in Writing a Thesis using the Transitivity System”. Her research was aimed to identify students’ abilities and difficulties in writing an English undergraduate thesis in a state university in Indonesia. Her findings shows that the paper delineates the results which show that students in general still need a lot of guidance and assistance in writing a data presentation and discussion chapter. Other research , Systemic Functional Grammar has a big contribution in teaching-learning writing. Such as learner could chose to build meaning based on the context of situation, and they also could use functional grammar for analyzing and evaluation their own writing<sup>13</sup>.

Regarding with those three previous studies, the writer found the gap among of studies. The further research would focus on Transitivity System in EFL Learner’s writing (Argumentative Essay Text) to know the quality of student’s writing. It is quite important to know the student’s writing in order to make some feedbacks for teachers themselves when they teach writing skill. So that, hopefully the teachers could give more attention about lexical grammar in accordance with the experiential meaning construction is chosen by the writer.

### **The Transitivity System of Systemic Functional Grammar**

This study principally adopts from a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). It identifies different kinds of meanings in the use of language, then, explains how language is organized to make meanings<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, the concept of the SFL is a system of choices that people would chose language system to make meaning appropriately with the social context<sup>15</sup>. Thus, the social context is made from the linguistic system.

Within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, the ideational metafunction is one of the key components of functional grammar<sup>16</sup>. It focuses on how clauses represent experiences and can be divided into two categories: experiential and logical. The experiential aspect is known as the transitivity system. Choices within this system reflect how individuals represent their reality, through actions, relationships, participant roles, and circumstances that shape the content of what they communicate.

The transitivity system helps to organize and express human experiences through language by categorizing actions, thoughts, and events into specific types of processes. This system includes six main types of processes: material (physical actions), mental (thoughts and feelings), verbal (acts of saying), relational (states of being or having), behavioral (physiological and psychological behaviors), and existential (expressions of existence)<sup>17</sup>. Each process type involves specific participants, such as actors, goals, or sensors, and may be accompanied by circumstances that provide additional details like time, place, manner, or

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<sup>12</sup> Emi Emilia, ‘Students’ Critical Thinking in Writing a Thesis Using the Transitivity System’, *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Negeri Malang* 17, no. 2 (2010): 108416.

<sup>13</sup> Herman Herman et al., ‘Exploring the Metafunctions to Improve EFL Learners’ Writing Ability in the Perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics’, *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities* 4, no. 2 (2023): 87–100.

<sup>14</sup> Mary J Schleppegrell and Teresa Oteíza, ‘Systemic Functional Linguistics: Exploring Meaning in Language’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Routledge, 2023), 156–69.

<sup>15</sup> Lise Fontaine and Anne McCabe, ‘Systemic Functional Linguistics’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Applied Linguistics* (Routledge, 2023), 322–35.

<sup>16</sup> Yibing Zhang, ‘Revelations on Grammar Teaching Based on an Analysis on Syntactic Structure of Transformational Generative Grammar and Metafunctions of Systemic Functional Grammar.’, *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature & Translation* 5, no. 10 (2022).

<sup>17</sup> Yasmin Kamila Eka Anugrah and Rizka Safriyani, ‘The Assessment of Indonesian Students’ Creative Writing in Recount Texts: A Transitivity Analysis’, *ICONELT* 4 (2024): 326–41.

cause<sup>18</sup>. Through these elements, language becomes a tool for shaping how individuals understand and convey the world around them.

### Material Process: Process of Doing

The material process is a type of transitivity process that focuses on actions or events<sup>19</sup>, essentially, it is the process of doing or happening. This process answers questions such as "What did someone do?" or "What happened?" It describes tangible actions that involve physical activity, movement, or any real-world event that can be observed or imagined as an act. In material processes, there are several types of participants involved. Dealing with the material process, the participants take a role in this process type is (1) Actor (the Doer of the process), (2) Goal (the Thing affected), (3) Range (the Thing unaffected by the process), (4) Beneficiary (the one to whom or for whom the process is said to take place)<sup>20</sup>.

The main participant is the Actor, which refers to the one who performs the action. Then there is the Goal, which is the entity that is directly affected by the action. In some cases, there may also be a Range, referring to an entity that is not affected by the action but is involved in it, such as when someone sings a song. The song is not changed by the act of singing, but it is part of the process. Another possible participant is the Beneficiary, which refers to the person or entity who benefits from or is the recipient of the action. Material processes are central in narratives and explanations, as they allow the speaker or writer to describe events, cause-and-effect relationships, and sequences of actions in a concrete and dynamic way. This type of process plays a crucial role in expressing experience and reality, especially in argumentative or expository texts where the presentation of actions<sup>21</sup>.

### Mental Process: Process of Sensing

The second type of process in the transitivity system is the mental process, which deals with internal experiences such as thinking, perceiving, feeling, and wanting<sup>22</sup>. Unlike material processes that focus on physical actions and external events, mental processes reflect what happens inside the mind and emotions of individuals. These processes help express how people observe the world, react to it emotionally, and form thoughts or desires. The participants involved in mental processes are typically two. The first is the Senser, which refers to the individual or entity that experiences the mental activity. This participant must be capable of consciousness, usually a human being or a character perceived to have awareness<sup>23</sup>. The second participant is the Phenomenon, which is the thing that is sensed, felt, thought about, liked, or perceived. It can be a physical object, a person, an event, or even an abstract idea, often expressed through a noun phrase or a more complex clause. Mental processes are essential in

<sup>18</sup> Abdul Basit, Nafeid Ullah, and Maham Rauf, 'Linguistic Analysis of Naguib Mahfouz's Short Story, The Answer Is No, Using Systemic Functional Grammar', *Al-Mahdi Research Journal (MRJ)* 5, no. 4 (2024): 484–95.

<sup>19</sup> Ervina Fadiarachmanda, 'Exploring Types of Transitivity Processes in Eighth Grade Students' Recount Text', *RETAIN: Journal of Research in English Language Teaching* 12, no. 03 (2024): 9–13.

<sup>20</sup> Ida Bagus Astika Pidada and Baiq Mandalika Adawiyah, 'The Analysis of Transitivity in Some Discourses in the Bali Times', in *ISSHE 2020: Proceedings of the First International Seminar Social Science, Humanities and Education, ISSHE 2020, 25 November 2020, Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia* (European Alliance for Innovation, 2021), 46.

<sup>21</sup> Pidada and Adawiyah.

<sup>22</sup> Safira Fauzi et al., 'An Analysis of Transitivity System Written by English Department Students', *Journal of English Education Forum (JEEF)* 4, no. 1 (31 March 2024): 38–43, <https://doi.org/10.29303/jeeef.v4i1.582>.

<sup>23</sup> Deni Danial Kesa et al., 'The Impact of Digital Entrepreneurship Courses and Motivation on Fostering a Green Entrepreneurial Spirit in Students' Perceptions', *International Journal of Educational Qualitative Quantitative Research* 3, no. 2 (2024): 46–55, <https://doi.org/10.58418/ijeqq.v3i2.120>.

texts where opinions, judgments, and reactions are conveyed, such as in argumentative or reflective writing. They allow writers to represent attitudes, beliefs, and emotional responses, which are crucial in influencing readers and expressing a point of view. Therefore, understanding and correctly using mental processes plays an important role in helping learners write more nuanced and persuasive texts.

### **Verbal Process: Process of Saying**

The third type of process in the transitivity system is the verbal process, which refers to the act of saying or any kind of symbolic exchange of meaning. This process is not limited to direct speech or spoken language, but also includes various forms of communication such as asking questions, making statements, giving commands, arguing, or even indirect forms like showing, signaling, or indicating. In other words, the verbal process encompasses both verbal and semiotic forms of expression, where meaning is conveyed from one participant to another through language or symbols. The participants involved in this process serve different roles.

The participants consist of this process are (1) A Sayer (the participant responsible for the verbal process), (2) A Receiver (the one to whom the saying is directed), (3) A Verbiage (the function that corresponds to what is said) and (4) A Target (the entity that is targeted by the process of saying)<sup>24</sup>. The main participant is the Sayer, the one who performs the act of communication. The Receiver is the person or entity to whom the message is addressed. Then, there is the Verbiage, which refers to the content or substance of what is said. This can be a direct quote, a report, or a summary of speech. Lastly, the Target is the participant that is affected or referenced in the act of saying, often appearing in cases where the speech is directed at or about someone or something. Verbal processes are especially common in dialogues, narratives, reports, and argumentative writing, where the exchange of information, expression of opinion, or attribution of statements is central. For learners, understanding verbal processes is key to building coherence and clarity when reporting speech, constructing arguments, or representing multiple voices in their writing.

### **Relational Process: Process of Being**

The fourth type of process in the transitivity system is the relational process, which is used to express states of being, possession, or classification. This type of process does not describe actions or mental activities, but rather focuses on relationships between entities, specifically how one thing is connected to another in terms of identity, role, class, or description. Relational processes are typically used to link a subject with information about it, such as qualities, definitions, or roles. These clauses are expressed in two main modes: attributive and identifying<sup>25</sup>.

In attributive relational clauses, a participant is related to a general description, property, or characteristic. For example, in the sentence "The sky is blue", "the sky" is the participant (known as the Carrier), and "blue" is the Attribute, the quality assigned to it. In contrast, identifying relational clauses involve a more specific relationship where one participant is equated with another, typically in terms of identity, classification, or definition. In such clauses, one element serves as the Token (the item being defined or named), and the other as the Value (the identity or role assigned to it). For example, in "Einstein was a scientist," "Einstein" is the Token and "a scientist" is the Value. These relational processes are particularly important in

<sup>24</sup> Alan Jaelani et al., 'Transitivity Analysis of AJ Hoge's Short Story "Day of the Dead"', *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching & Learning, Linguistics & Literature* 11, no. 1 (2023).

<sup>25</sup> Rani Fadilah and Heri Kuswoyo, 'Transitivity Analysis of Presidential Debate between Trump and Biden in 2020', *Linguist. Lit. J* 2, no. 2 (2021): 98–107.

academic and descriptive writing, where explaining concepts, defining terms, and making classifications are essential. Mastery of relational clauses allows learners to produce more precise, informative, and logically structured sentences, which are crucial for clear communication in both spoken and written contexts.

### **Behavioral Process**

The fifth type of process in the transitivity system is the behavioral process, which represents physiological and psychological behaviors. This process type lies at the boundary between material and mental processes<sup>26</sup>, as it reflects actions that are outwardly observable but are often driven by internal experiences. Behavioral processes typically describe human or animal actions that indicate feelings or perceptions without explicitly stating them as thoughts or emotions<sup>27</sup>. Examples include actions like breathing, coughing, smiling, watching, or staring. These are not purely physical actions like those found in material processes, nor are they purely internal like in mental processes, but rather a blend of both. The participant involved in behavioral processes is known as the Behaver, which is usually a conscious being (often a human) who performs the behavior. Although behavioral clauses generally involve just one participant, the subtlety and nuance of this process make it significant, especially in narrative or descriptive writing, where it is used to show character reactions or emotional states indirectly.

### **Existential Process**

The sixth and final type of process in the transitivity system is the existential process. This process is used to express the existence or presence of something, typically introduced by the word “there” in English<sup>28</sup>. Rather than describing an action, emotion, or relation, existential processes function to state that something exists or occurs. These clauses are especially useful in introducing new information or elements into discourse, for example, “There was a loud noise” or “There are many reasons to study.” The only essential participant in this type of clause is known as the Existent—the entity that is said to exist. This could be a physical object, a situation, an event, or even an abstract concept. Existential processes are common in both spoken and written language, particularly when setting scenes, describing conditions, or introducing new ideas into a discussion. For learners, understanding existential clauses is helpful for constructing clear and informative statements, particularly in descriptive and explanatory writing.

### **Circumstance**

In addition to the main process types and participants, circumstances play an important role in enriching the meaning of a clause. Circumstances provide additional details about the process by answering questions such as when, where, how, why, with whom, or in what role<sup>29</sup>. They are usually realized through adverbial groups or prepositional phrases, and they can occur

<sup>26</sup> Nguyen Thi Thanh Hoa, ‘AN SFL ANALYSIS OF PROCESS AND MOOD TYPES IN ENGLISH JOURNAL ARTICLES ON FINANCE’, *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies* 38, no. 3 (30 June 2022): 44–51, <https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4841>.

<sup>27</sup> Anugrah and Safriyani, ‘The Assessment of Indonesian Students’ Creative Writing in Recount Texts: A Transitivity Analysis’.

<sup>28</sup> Laure Sarda and Ludovica Lena, ‘Existential Constructions’, in *Existential Constructions across Languages: Forms, Meanings and Functions*, 2023, 1–32, <https://doi.org/10.1075/hcp.76.01sar>.

<sup>29</sup> Susan R. Kirsh et al., ‘A Realist Review of Shared Medical Appointments: How, for Whom, and under What Circumstances Do They Work?’, *BMC Health Services Research* 17, no. 1 (4 December 2017): 113, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-017-2064-z>.

with any of the six process types. Circumstances help to contextualize the action, event, or state described in the clause, making the message more precise and complete. There are several types of circumstances commonly identified, including: extent (indicating distance or duration), location (place or time), manner (how something is done), cause (why something happens), accompaniment (who or what is involved), matter (what it is about), and role (in what capacity or identity). By incorporating circumstances into their writing, learners can produce more detailed, coherent, and context-rich texts. This element is especially valuable in academic and argumentative writing, where clarity, specificity, and completeness of information are essential.

## B. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method exactly the textual analysis method. Textual analysis is a method of data analysis that closely examines the content and meaning of texts or their structure and discourse<sup>30</sup>. This textual analysis is a methodology that has increased an understanding of the construction of textual meaning in variety of cultural texts. Furthermore, this study conducts based on the analysis of documents to examine the lexica-grammar choices using transitivity system. Therefore, the source of the data in this study is text which has fifty one clauses. It is taken from one of the EFL Learner's argumentative essay in one of the state university in Cirebon. The reason why the writer takes the ELF Learner's writing is because she has many achievements in writing competition. So that the, writer curious with EFL Learner's writing. Another reason, the writer would like to know the quality of EFL Learner's writing using Systemic Functional Linguistics which concerns in transitivity system. The form of data used for linguistic analysis and all of the description of grammar is based on text. However, the instrument of this study is the writer herself. In this case, the writer chose the text, analyze the text, make a percentage from the result of analyzing the text then interpret the result into finding and discussion.

## C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents the transitivity elements produced by EFL learners in the argumentative essay text. Specifically, this part explains how EFL learners build experiential information which concerns on process type, participants and circumstances that are used the most in the text. The major concern of this study is to analyze the clause as representation deals with the exploration of the transitivity patterns and involves the specification of the choice of a process itself, the participant roles into process, and circumstances associated with the process in each clause.

### The Process Types of Transitivity System as Found in the whole Text

This part presents the result of all the process types of transitivity based on the writer's analysis in the text "Mother Tongue Links to Students' Literacy Development" written by EFL Learner in one of the state university in Cirebon who always get achievements as a best writer in the third region of Cirebon.

In this case, there are fifty one clauses for overall clauses in the text. One of most process that is often produced by the EFL Learner's in her argument belongs to the material process. Here is the following table would show the most process using by EFL Learner's writing.

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<sup>30</sup> Karoliina Isoaho, Daria Gritsenko, and Eetu Mäkelä, 'Topic Modeling and Text Analysis for Qualitative Policy Research', *Policy Studies Journal* 49, no. 1 (19 February 2021): 300–324, <https://doi.org/10.1111/psj.12343>.



**Table 1.** Process Types in the whole Text

Transitivity (Process Types)		
Material	26	43.33%
Mental	9	15.00%
Verbal	3	5.00%
Relational	19	31.67%
Existential	3	5.00%
Behavioral	0	0%
Total process	60	100%

From the Table 1 above, it is clear that almost the amount of process types in the text belong to material processes which have almost over a half of all process types. It is 26 or 43.33 %. Then, the second place belongs to relational processes which has roughly a third of process types. It is 19 or 31.67 %. Then, mental processes takes in the third place, it is 9 or 15%. Therefore, the last processes which have a small fraction of process types belong to verbal and existential. It is only 3 or 5 % of each process.

### The Process Types, Participants and Circumstances as Found in the Introduction Section

In this section, the writer presents the process types, participants and circumstance are found in introduction part. There are only three clauses that are written by the EFL Learner. Then of course only three processes found in this part.

**Table 2.** Process Types in Introduction Section

Transitivity (Process Types) in Introduction Section		
Material	0	0
Mental	0	0
Verbal	1	33.33%
Relational	0	0
Existential	2	66.66%
Behavioral	0	0
Total process	3	100%
Total clause	3 clauses	

From the Table 2 above, it is clear only two types of process that is used by the EFL Learner. These are verbal and existential processes. The existential process takes the first place to explain the existence of participants. It is 66.66 %. Then, the rest of it belongs to verbal process which has 33.33%. Here, the EFL Learner uses verbal process and Sayer as the participant to open the introduction section. It means that the EFL Learner tries to open the introduction verbally and structurally. Other studies have asserts that using verbal process in the beginning of introduction means that it constitutes an emerging attempt to construe other representation<sup>31</sup>. It also promotes the credibility and accuracy of arguments that would be produced by the writer.

<sup>31</sup> Dian Luthfiyati, Widyastuti Widyastuti, and Suhartono Suhartono, 'An Analysis of Systemic Functional Linguistics Interpersonal Meaning Representation in Classroom Interaction', in *5th International Conference on English Language Teaching (ICON-ELT 2024)* (Atlantis Press, 2024), 152–67; Schleppegrell and Oteiza, 'Systemic Functional Linguistics: Exploring Meaning in Language'.

### Participants and Circumstances as Follow the Process Types in Introduction Section

Furthermore, the total participants are found in introduction section is the same as the process types. There are three participants, and one participant is as the object or complement of the process types. Here the following Table 3 would explain clearly.

**Table 3.** Participants and Circumstances in Introduction Section

Transitivity (Participant and Circumstance as Found in Introduction Section)					
Participants			Circumstance		
Sayer	1	25 %	Manner	1	25 %
Verbiage	1	25 %	Role	2	50 %
Existent	2	50 %	Matter	1	25 %
Total	4	100 %	Total	4	100 %

From the table above, a half of participants belong to the existential. Then, the rest of participants belong to sayer and verbiage which have 25 % of each participant. The use of existent participants belongs to the existential process, and sayer and verbiage belong to verbal process of transitivity. In this section, the EFL Learner uses the sayer as the participant in the word “the writer (Sy) will discuss (Pv)”. It means that the EFL learner uses verbal process in the first clause to introduce her argument in the text. Furthermore, only three types of circumstance that is used by EFL Learner, such as manner, role and matter. In this case, the EFL Learner uses a role circumstance two times to inform reader that there is an important role of EFL learner argument which should keep in the readers’ mind.

### The Process Types, Participants and Circumstances as Found in the Body Paragraph

This part presents the findings of transitivity system as found in the main topic of EFL Learner’s argumentative essay text. Among of three elements of transitivity (process types, participants and circumstance) would be clearly shown in the following Table 4 below.

**Table 4.** Process Types in Body Paragraph

Transitivity (Process Types)		
Material	19	39.58 %
Mental	9	18.75 %
Verbal	2	4.16 %
Relational	17	35.41 %
Existential	1	2.08 %
Behavioral	0	0 %
Total process	48	1000 %

Process types are the main system of transitivity. From this element, we could know the quality of someone’s writing that is chosen to convince the reader through many kinds of text. Then of course each kinds of text has own composition of process types. Moreover, the table of percentages above shows that the largest portion of process type belongs to the material process. It has 39.58 % from 48 of total process of transitivity system. It indicates that the EFL Learner tries to construe the aspect of field. Supported by many research that material processes usually is used to build the aspects of the field, occupy the highest number<sup>32</sup>. From this process

<sup>32</sup> Denise Bergström, Cathrine Norberg, and Marie Nordlund, “The Text Comes First” – Principles Guiding EFL Materials Developers’ Vocabulary Content Decisions’, *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 67, no. 1

also we could see that the EFL Learner tries to force an exert power by using material process. The domain of 'doing' is used to press the power in a text.

Thus, the second place belongs to relational process which has 35.41 %. It indicates that the EFL Learner often uses attributive relational process or identifying relational process to engage the two things. For instance, in the fourth clause, "(4i) For most Indonesian (Cc), mother tongue (V) is (Pi) the first language (T)...." the EFL Learner uses identifying relational process to identify "mother tongue" to the "the first language". In sum, the role of relational process in each clause is to identify or describe two things in the same clause. Supported by other research<sup>33</sup>, the existential of relational process is as a process of being and the relationship between two or more things or concepts in the spoken or written language.

Therefore, the third position of process types belongs to the mental process. In this case, the EFL Learner uses mental process to argue her thinking into some arguments in the text. There is more than one argument in the text argues by the EFL Learner (See Appendix B). For instance in the clause "(16i) In this case, the writer (Sy) argues (Pme) (16ii) that there (Cr) is (Pi) literacy engineering (At) among mother tongue (Cm)". In the sixteenth clause here, the EFL Learner uses mental process to argue her statement about literacy engineering in mother tongue. Supported by other research<sup>34</sup>, the use of the mental process in that clause makes reader easy to understand the EFL Learner's arguments.

As ideally, in argumentative text, the use of mental process should have the biggest percentages. It is because the content in argumentative text is mostly based on what the writer's thinking or idea. Hence, the mental process is the realization of the writer's idea. Mental process is used to produce a word relating to the thinking or feeling<sup>35</sup>. But then, unfortunately, in this text, the EFL Learner only uses nine mental processes from 48 process types.

Furthermore, the verbal and existential processes take the rest position in the text. Both processes only have 4.16 % for verbal and 2.08 % for existential process. It means that the EFL Learner only uses two verbal processes and one existential process from 48 process types as found in body paragraph. Meanwhile, commonly, in argumentative essay text, verbal process has the high position to argue some arguments after the mental process. For instance, in the first clause the EFL Learner open the introduction by using verbal process.

### **The Participants and Circumstances Found in Body Paragraph of Argumentative Essay Text.**

This part presents the results of participant functions and circumstances in the body paragraph. The findings show that there are thirteen participants involve in the body paragraph section, then, eight circumstances as found in this paragraph. For the clear result, the following Table 5 below would explain clearly about the findings of participant and circumstance functions.

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(2 January 2023): 154–68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2021.1990122>; Gulzhakhan Tazhitova et al., 'Local Materials as a Means of Improving Motivation to EFL Learning in Kazakhstan Universities', *Education Sciences* 12, no. 9 (6 September 2022): 604, <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12090604>.

<sup>33</sup> Dianita Dianita, 'Transitivity As An Indicator Of Students' recount Writing', *English Journal Literacy Utama* 7, no. 1 (2023): 674–83.

<sup>34</sup> Ida Yulianawati and Natalia Anggrarini, 'An Analysis of Undergraduate Students' Formal Essay Writing Performance Based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics Theory', *JELLT (Journal of English Language and Language Teaching)* 6, no. 1 (22 April 2022): 69–78, <https://doi.org/10.36597/jellt.v6i1.12089>.

<sup>35</sup> Andrew Burton and John Radford, *Thinking in Perspective: Critical Essays in the Study of Thought Processes* (Taylor & Francis, 2022); Jumilia Jumilia and Jayasree S. Kanathasan, 'Trauma Healing Therapy for Post-Earthquake Children Using Traditional Randai Approach', *International Journal of Nursing Information* 3, no. 2 (31 December 2024): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.58418/ijni.v3i2.109>.

**Table 5.** Participants and Circumstance in the Body Paragraph

Transitivity (Participants And Circumstance In Body Paragraph)					
Process types			Circumstance		
Actor	9	14.63%	Location	5	15.62 %
Goal	5	10.98%	Extent	2	6.25 %
Beneficiary	1	1.22%	Manner	12	37.5 %
Range	5	7.32%	Cause	1	3.12 %
Senser	4	4.88%	Accompaniment	3	9.37 %
Phenomenon	4	4.88%	Matter	1	3.12 %
Sayer	2	3.66%	Role	4	12.5 %
Verbiage	3	4.88%	Agent	4	12.5 %
Existent	2	3.66%			
Token	3	3.66%			
Value	3	3.66%			
Carrier	14	19.51%			
Attribute	13	17.07%			
Total	68	100%	Total	32	100 %

From the Table 5 above, it can be seen that the roughly quarter of participants involve in each process types is “Carrier + Attributive”. It has the same total as the relational process in the body part section. It indicates that the EFL Learner often engages two things in one clause using the intensive relational process. For instance in the twenty-fourth clause “(24i) The way (Cr) [[to save (Pm)]] language originality is (Pi) by effective teaching (Att) in all subjects (Cm),”. From that clause, it is clear that the EFL Learner tries to engage two things between the way to save original language and effective teaching. It indicates that the EFL Learner tries to give a further description to reader about saving language originality. Supported by other researchers argued that relational attributive of participants has a relationship with its general characteristics and descriptions<sup>36</sup>.

Thus, the most following participants involve in the text which has the second position is “Actor”. It is also followed by the following other participants, such as, goal, beneficiary and range. Those participants include of the material process. Hence, it has the same total as the existence of material process. For instance, in the seventeenth clause, “(17i) The writer (A) comes from (Pm) Sunda (G), (17ii) that have been graduated (Pm) in SMAN 1 Palimanan (Cl) (17iii) which priority (A) come (Pm) from Java (R)”. This clause representation points out that the EFL Learner shows her brief existences towards text with the material process.

<sup>36</sup> Mahvash Kaffashi et al., ‘A Contrastive Study of Relational Attributive Clauses in Narrative Texts in English and Persian Based on Halliday (2004)’, *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 192 (June 2015): 156–65, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.06.023>; Dea Putri Rafelina and Budi Hermawan, ‘The Ideational Meanings of Multimodal Texts Presented in an EFL Textbook’, *TLEMC (Teaching and Learning English in Multicultural Contexts)* 6, no. 2 (31 December 2022): 68–82, <https://doi.org/10.37058/tlemc.v6i2.5815>; Muhammad Agung Ibrahim and Ika Lestari Damayanti, ‘The Representation of Environmental Issues in an EFL Module for Primary School: A Multimodal Analysis’, *JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)* 11, no. 1 (2024): 23–50.

### The Process Types of Transitivity as Found in Conclusion Section

The conclusion part serves the result of element transitivity systems. From the following Table 6 below, only two process types appear in this part. Those are material and relational processes.

**Table 6.** Process Types and Participants in Conclusion Section

Transitivity (Process Types and Following Participants)					
Process Types			Participants		
Material	7	77.77 %	Actor	6	42.85 %
Relational	2	22.22 %	Goal	4	28.58 %
			Range	1	7.14 %
			Carrier	2	14.28 %
			Attributive	1	7.14 %
Total process	9	100 %			
Total clause	9		Total	14	100 %

In this case, the EFL Learner closes her arguments very briefly. It is because the number of material process has the huge percentages. It is 77.77 %. It means that almost process types is used by EFL Learner belong to the material process. It is also followed by the Actor participants who often appear in this section. It could be seen from the thirty-first clauses that the EFL Learner sums up the argumentative text using material process. In this case, the EFL Learner summaries that parents and teachers have a big role to develop student literacy that is linked to the mother tongue.

Therefore, the EFL Learner uses the relational process to describe one of aspects of maintaining mother tongue . For instance, it could be seen in the thirty-second clauses “(32i) The challenge (Cr) is (Pi) [[to maintain (Pm)]] their mother tongue (Att)” This clause shows that there are two things which have related one another. It indicates that there is one process of being in that clause. Supported by other researcher that the relational process essentially as a process of being and there is relationship between two things or concepts<sup>37</sup>.

### The Circumstances as Found in the Conclusion Section

There are four circumstances found in the conclusion section on Table 7. Those are circumstance of manner, role, location and cause. But then, the highest circumstances belong to the manner and location. Those have the same number of circumstances which have 33.33 % on Table 7. Thus the rest of circumstances belong to role and cause.

In this case, the EFL Learner uses circumstance of manner to begin summarizing the arguments in the body paragraph. It could be seen in the first clause of conclusion section, “(29i) To sum up (Cm), parents (Cr) have (Pi) important role (At) [[to give (Pm)]] understanding (Co) to their children (Co)”. From this clause representation, it shows that the EFL Learner writes the first phrase which indicates as the circumstance of manner. It means that the learner tries to inform reader that this part is conclusion section.

<sup>37</sup> Stanislaus Guna and Hieronimus Canggung Darong, ‘The Representation of Social Actors in EFL Textbooks: Systemic Functional Linguistics Perspective’, *Indonesian Journal of EFL and Linguistics*, 2023, 221–32; Farhan et al., ‘Reading Passages and Conversation Text in EFL Textbook for Junior High School: Analysis on the Process of Transitivity System’.

**Table 7.** The Circumstance in Conclusion Section

Transitivity (Circumstance)		
Manner	3	33.33 %
Role	2	22.22 %
Location	3	33.33 %
Cause	1	11.11 %
	9	100 %

Thus the circumstance of location that is used by the EFL Learner in text provide further experiential information about the best place for fostering literacy in students at school. As in “(29i) To sum up (Cm), parents (Cr) have (Pi) important role (At) [[to give (Pm)]] understanding (Co) to their children (Co) (29ii) that mother tongue (A) as a foundation (Cm) could develop (Pm) their literacy skills (R). (30) The understanding (A) is supported (Pm) by teachers and peers (G) in school area (Cl). (31i) Teachers (A) guide (Pm) students (G) (31ii) that the position (A) of mother tongue (G) as cultural identity (Cm) [[in order to differ (Pm)]] from other region (Cl). (32i) The challenge (Cr) is (Pi) [[to maintain (Pm)]] their mother tongue (Cc) (32ii) when they (A) begin (Pm) live (G) in other region (Cl)” (See Appendix B) the EFL Learner produces three circumstance of locations to make the reader easy get the experiential meaning from the learner’s writing.

## D. CONCLUSION

From those findings and discussion above, this paper has completely presented the result of analyzing lexico-grammar in EFL learners’ writing using the transitivity system. The finding shows that the material process takes the highest portion compared to mental and verbal processes. In fact, in argumentative essays, mental and verbal processes should predominate. This imbalance indicates that the EFL learner has not fully met the criteria of argumentative writing and has not maximized the expression of her arguments in the text.

Furthermore, this study offers important implications and contributions. By applying the transitivity framework, teachers and curriculum developers gain a diagnostic tool to pinpoint exactly which process types learners overuse or underuse in different genres. This insight enables targeted feedback and tailored instructional materials that guide students toward more balanced, genre-appropriate lexico-grammatical choices. Academically, the research contributes to our understanding of how systemic functional linguistics can inform EFL writing pedagogy, demonstrating that an analysis of process types not only reveals learners’ current profiles but also directs them toward more effective argumentative strategies. As a result, educators can foster students’ critical thinking and persuasive skills more systematically, ultimately raising the quality of EFL writing instruction.

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