

## AN ANALYSIS OF DESCRIPTIVE TEXT IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOK USING TRANSITIVITY SYSTEM (A CASE STUDY OF READING PASSAGES)

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**Abstract:** The main focus of the study is to investigate to what extent the descriptive texts in English textbook meet its criteria in terms of purposes, schematic structures and linguistic features. A qualitative case study method with document analysis technique is employed as the method of the study. The study also applied Systemic Functional Linguistics framework proposed mainly by M.A.K. Halliday, yet the study had focused on Transitivity system in analyzing descriptive texts. The prime data of the study were four descriptive texts of reading passages from four different chapters of an English textbook which have implemented 2013 Curriculum. The data analysis was done by examining social purposes, schematic structures and linguistics features (mainly Transitivity system). The findings showed that in terms of social purpose, three out of four descriptive texts met the purpose of descriptive text. In terms of schematic structure, one text met the criteria as descriptive text included personal comment; two texts met the criteria of descriptive text but did not include personal comment; and the last one did not meet the criteria of descriptive text. Moreover, in terms of linguistic features, only two of four descriptive texts had closely followed the linguistic features of descriptive text. However, it can be concluded that some descriptive texts in the textbook entitled “*Bahasa Inggris for Senior High School Grade X*” were unsatisfactory in which they were not satisfy the criteria of descriptive text.

**Keywords:** *Descriptive Text, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Transitivity System*

### Introduction

Descriptive text, based on the 2013 Curriculum, is one of text types that have to be learned by senior high school students in Indonesia. Emilia and Christie (2013) argue that learning descriptive

genre is essential in order student can describe vivid and proper information (Emilia & Christie, 2013, p.1). In learning descriptive genre, students can use textbooks, as it plays a key role in teaching

and learning process (Mc Grath, 2006; Presnyakova, 2011, p.8). In Indonesian context, all public schools have used compulsory textbook published by the Department of Education and Culture, namely *Buku Sekolah Elektronik* (BSE) (Priyanto, 2009, p.2; Sorohiti, 2005, p.2). Regarding the *Buku Sekolah Elektronik* (BSE), many discussions was held by few scholars in many seminars and workshops regarding the content of current BSE which result the findings on some drawbacks in terms of its content, even though the drafts have gone through a tight review and selection (Priyanto, 2009, p.2). On the other hand, the English textbook should provide a good example of descriptive texts for students to get a good understanding of what the descriptive genre is. Beck, McKeown, & Worthy argue (1995, p. 220, cited in Presnyakova, 2005, p.8), “students’ success in school depends to a great extent on their understanding of the texts, and this understanding is influenced ‘by a variety of features that characterize the nature of text’.” Thus, the descriptive texts in textbook should be analyzed in order to look whether texts provide an appropriate example to the students, based on the criteria of the descriptive text, such as its schematic

structure, purpose and linguistic features. Experiential metafunction as one of the SFL framework analysis was commonly used to analyze texts in textbook, in terms of how text delineates its meaning. Thus, the research aims at investigating to what extent do the descriptive texts of the English textbook used in the first grade of the senior high school meet the criteria of descriptive genre in terms of its schematic structure, purpose and linguistic features.’

There are some researchers conducting the study using the transitivity system, such as Nguyen (2012) who investigates the main character’s personality is portrayed and represented through language used in short story, Presnyakova (2013) who investigated the process types to reveal the distribution of process types in the texts of elementary school textbooks and Ardini (2012) who analyzed English textbook for junior high school student. In short, they tried to analyze the text in order to find out the process types applied in the text. From all of the research, it was unforeseen that there was a few literature written about descriptive genre, while it seemed to be essential type of text (McSaveny, 2010, p.2). What makes the research differs from those three researches is that the research

analyzed descriptive text in English textbooks for first grade senior high school which is seemed important to be conducted.

- **Descriptive Text**

Descriptive Text is a kind of text with a purpose to give information. The context of this kind of text is the description of particular thing, animal, person, or others, for instance: our pets or a person we know well (Gerot and Wignell, 1994). According to Oshima and Hogue (1997:50 cited in Utami, 2014, p.29 ), Descriptive writing appeals to the senses, so it tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, and/ or sounds. In addition, a good description is like a “word picture”; the reader can imagine the object, place, or person in his or her mind. Regarding explanation above, in order to achieve its purpose, Descriptive text has its own schematic structure and linguistic features, which will be discussed below.

Every genre has a certain structure or stages in order to get something done through language (Emilia, 2014, p.86). There are two elements as requirement for a text to be identified as Descriptive text; Identification or General Statement and

Description element (Derewianka, 1990; Butt et al., 2000; Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Knapp and Watkins, 2005, p.149; Nafisah and Kurniawan, 2007, p.15; Emilia & Christie, 2013, p.63).The elaboration of schematic structure of descriptive text is discussed below.

- Identification: the identification element aims at introducing and identifying specific participant (a person, thing, place, animal or event) to be described in the Descriptive text (Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Nafisah and Kurniawan, 2007, p.15; Emilia and Christie, 2013, p.36)
- Description: the description aims at describing the specific participant in text. It contains descriptive details or information of the specific participant by providing the description of its characteristics, appearances, personality, habits or qualities (Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Nafisah and Kurniawan, 2007, p.15; Emilia and Christie, 2013, p.36).

Related to its linguistic features, Gerot and Wignell (1994), Emilia and Christie (2013), Knapp and Watkins

(2005), Derewianka (1990) and Nafisah and Kurniawan (2007), state that a descriptive text employs the following linguistic features:

- a. Focus on specific participants as the main character;
- b. Use present tense as dominant tenses;
- c. Use linking verbs or relational process frequently (is, are, has, have, belongs to) in order to classify and describe appearance or qualities and parts or functions of phenomena);
- d. Use action verbs or material process and behavioural process in giving additional description regarding action and behaviour done by the participants in text;
- e. Use mental verb or mental process when describing feelings;
- f. Use nominal group frequently to describe;
- g. Use adjective and adverbs to add information to nouns and add information to verbs to provide more detailed description about the topic;
- h. Use adverbial phrases to add more information about manner, place, or time and sometimes realized in embedded clause which functions as circumstances.

- **Systemic Functional Linguistic**

Systemic Functional Linguistics is an approach to language developed mainly by M.A.K Halliday (O'Donnel, 2011, p.2). Systemic Functional Linguistic is concerned to describe meaning potential – the linguistic options or choices that are available to construct meaning in particular context (Christie and Unsworth, 2000, p.2 cited in Emilia, 2014, p.66). In the similar vein, Butt et al (2003, p. 257, cited in Arancon, 2013 p.251) argue that Systemic Functional Linguistic viewed language as “a resource for making meaning”, where language and context are inseparable.

Furthermore, Christie & Unsworth, Halliday & Matthiessen and Eggins pointed out that Systemic Functional Linguistics also views that all languages have to manage three major functions or also known as metafunctions (Christie & Unsworth, 2000, p. 2; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 30; Eggins, 2004, p. 20), those are:

- a. Ideational Metafunction

The ideational metafunction is about the natural world in the broadest sense, and it is concerned with clauses as representation (Thanh, 2008, p.6). It is realized in

field through the transitivity patterns of grammar (Eggins, 1994, as cited in Emilia, 2014, p. 79).

b. Interpersonal Metafunction

The interpersonal metafunction is about the social world, especially the relationship between the speaker and the hearer and it is concerned with clauses as exchanges (Thanh, 2008, p.7). It is realized within tenor through the mood pattern of grammar (Eggins, 1994, as cited in Emilia, 2014, p. 79).

c. Textual Metafunction

The textual metafunction is about the verbal world, especially the flow of information in a text, and is concerned with clauses as messages (Thanh, 2008, p.8). It is described by Halliday (1994:97) as the 'relevance' or the enabling function. It is realized in mode through theme patterns of grammar (Eggins, 1994, as cited in Emilia, 2014, p. 79).

- **Transitivity System**

The transitivity system is the overall grammatical resource for construing goings on (Martin, Matthiesen

& Painter, 1997, p.100, cited in Emilia, 2014, p. 149). Transitivity is in fact one of the major strands of meaning in the clauses of all human languages. It defines the range types of process that it is possible to express through the language concerned and the participants in each of those types of process (Fawcett, 1996, p.10). Halliday (1994: 107, cited in Thanh, 2008, p.7) states that transitivity construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types. In the transitivity system of English, six process types are recognized: material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal and existential. Regarding this, Halliday (1994a, as cited in Emilia, 2014, p. 150) and Christie & Martin (2007, p. 5) also explain that each process consists of three components, the *process* (represented by verbs and verbal groups), the *participants* (which include both the 'doer' of the process as well as the 'done-to' who are at the receiving end of action), and *circumstances* (adverbial groups or prepositional phrase, detailing where, when, and how something has occurred).

## **Methodology**

- **Research Design**

The research is carried out by qualitative research design, since this research generates meaning and interpretation about descriptive texts within English textbook for grade students of senior high school from the data collected in the field which has been analyzed (Creswell, 2013 p.9). Regarding this, this research employs a qualitative case study, since the focus of the study is to answer “how” and the data involved in the study cannot be manipulated (Yin, 2003, cited in Baxter and Jack, 2008, p. 545), which is in this case about the descriptive text within English texts for X grade students of senior high school. Moreover, a case study is compatible with this research in the way case study allows the researcher to explore in depth a program, event, activity, process or one or more individuals (Creswell, 2009, p.13).

- **Document Studies**

Lincoln and Guba (1995 cited in Frechtling, 2002 p.57) defined a document as “any written or recorded material” not prepared for the purposes of the evaluation or at the request of the inquirer. For Marshall & Rossman (1995), the use of documents often entails a specialized

analytic approach called content analysis. The raw material for content analysis may be any form of communication, usually written materials (textbooks, novels, newspapers, e-mail messages); other forms of communication— music, pictures, or political speeches—may also be included. However this research uses English textbook, entitled Bahasa Inggris for Grade X Senior High School, to gather the data.

The textbook has been chosen because of the practicality, usability and the purpose of the study itself. In terms of practicality, the textbook has been chosen because it was not difficult to find and contain data sources to be used in the study. In terms of usability, the textbook was widely used in real teaching situation by grade ten students who have learned English using curriculum 2013 in Indonesian Senior High Schools. While in terms of the study’s purpose, the textbook has been chosen in order to investigate to what extent Descriptive texts provided in this textbook meets its criteria.

The analysis of the study specifically focused on selected reading passages categorized as Descriptive text. The Descriptive texts have been chosen because they are representation of factual genre text which is useful and fundamental to be used

in many areas of life where people need to show, report, describe, and present information (Anderson & Anderson, 2003; Emilia & Christie, 2013, p.1). Hence, it is believed that learning the Descriptive genre through Descriptive texts is important in providing students who learn English, the basic knowledge of communication. Moreover, the needs of learning the Descriptive text is stipulated in grade ten's Core Competence or Kompetensi Inti (KI) and Basic Competence or Kompetensi Dasar (KD) of 2013 Curriculum, which states that the grade ten students should comprehend social function, schematic structure and linguistic features of simple spoken and written Descriptive text about persons, tourist attraction and famous historical building (KD 3.7, see Chapter II).

- **Analysis of Texts**

The purpose of analysis of the texts is to investigate the descriptive texts written in English textbook for grade X senior high school in terms of its schematic structure and linguistic features that will help the teacher in order to develop teaching material, especially in teaching descriptive text. In order to achieve the

purpose, first the data is analyzed in terms of its schematic structure. Second, the data is analyzed in terms of its linguistic features by applying the transitivity system and after that the conclusion or interpretation is drawn qualitatively from it.

**Data Presentation and Discussion**

**Table 1 Summary of Findings**

No.	Text	Purpose	Schematic Structure	Process Types Employed in the Text					
				Mat	Men	Ver	Rel	Beh	Exi
1.	Text 1	Explicit	Fulfill Criteria	12	6	-	15	1	-
2.	Text 2	Explicit	Fulfill Criteria	14	3	-	10	-	-
3.	Text 3	Explicit	Fulfill Criteria	16	4	-	23	-	1
4.	Text 4	Explicit	Not Fulfill Criteria	16	4	3	15	-	2

- **Summary of Schematic Structure and Purpose Analysis of All Descriptive Texts of Reading Passages**

Briefly, although all texts have explicitly stated their purposes, only three of them in some degree have followed social purpose of Descriptive text; those

are Text 1, Text 2 and Text 3. Those texts have been socially aims at describing, showing and presenting clear information of particular person, thing, place or event based on what is seen, heard, felt, tasted and smelled (Derewianka, 1990; Gerot and Wignell, 1994; Knapp and Watkins, 2005; Nafisah and Kurniawan 2007). Meanwhile, Text 4 doesn't achieve the purpose of descriptive text; rather, it socially followed the purpose of explanation text, which aimed at explaining how or why the process involved in the formation or workings of natural or sociocultural phenomenon (Gerot and Wignell, 1994; Knapp and Watkins, 2005; Emilia and Christie, 2013).

Looking from their schematic structure, only three texts successfully followed the schematic structure of descriptive text; those are Text 1, Text 2, Text 3. All of those texts have Identification and Description as their element, in order to achieve their criteria as descriptive text (Derewianka, 1990; Butt et al. 2000; Gerot and Wignell, 1994; Knapp and Watkins, 2005; Nafisah and Kurniawan, 2007; Emilia and Christie, 2013). Nevertheless, a drawback is found in Text 2 that is lack of reference to the main topic which makes this text becomes

difficult to read (Emilia and Christie, 2013, p.49). Moreover, rather than follow schematic structure of descriptive text, Text 4, follows quite closely a typical structure of an Explanation text, in which it has Phenomenon Identification and Explanation sequence as its element (Gerot and Wignell, 1994; Knapp and Watkins, 2005; Emilia and Christie, 2013).

- **Summary of Linguistic Features Analysis of All Descriptive Texts of Reading Passages**

The points of interest of the linguistic analysis, utilizing Functional Grammar especially on Transitivity framework, denote that each text present different quality and comprehensibility of texts.

Regarding Text 1, in terms of linguistic features, this text focuses on specific participant (Dinda), predominantly uses present tense, employs possessive relational processes and attributive relational processes, uses material process and behavioral process in giving additional description of participant, uses mental process to describe feelings of participant, uses nominal group (e.g. my best friend), uses adjective and adverbs to add information to nouns and add information

to verbs in order to provide more detailed description about the specific participant, uses adverbial phrases to add more information about time and place, extent, manner, accompaniment which function as circumstances. The use of these linguistics features accounts to the definitive presumption that this text has achieved the criteria of descriptive text as suggested by Derewianka (1990), Gerot and Wignell (1994), Knapp and Watkins (2005), Nafisah and Kurniawan (2007), Emilia (20120, Emilia and Christie (2013).

In short, in terms of linguistic features, Text 2 focuses on specific participant and its aspect (Tanjung Puting and Camp Leaky), mostly employs present tense, uses nominal group (e.g. a real jungle), uses adjective and adverbs to add information of participant, uses circumstances of time, place, cause, manner and role, which some of its occurred in embedded clauses. However, this text mostly uses material process rather than relational process. The used of material process as predominant process makes this text closely follows the linguistic features of recount text (Christie, 2005, p.70-71).

In regard to Text 3, in terms of linguistic features, this text focuses on

specific participant and some different features (Niagara Falls and some attractions of Niagara), predominantly uses relational, material and mental processes, mostly occurs in forms of simple present tense, uses nominal group frequently (e.g. the most powerful film experience), uses adjective and adverbs, uses adverbial phrases to add more information about place, time, accompaniment, manner and extent which function as circumstances. Thus, the presence of these linguistics features results in the final inference that this text has fulfilled the criteria of a descriptive text proposed by Derewianka (1990), Gerot and Wignell (1994), Knapp and Watkins (2005), Nafisah and Kurniawan (2007), Emilia (20120, Emilia and Christie (2013).

Concerning Text 4, in terms of linguistic features, rather than as specific participant, this text has “Stonehenge” as phenomenon to be explained. This text mostly uses material and relational processes, uses simple present tense to classify and describe, uses past tense as it deals with particular events, uses passive voice, uses generalized non-human participant (e.g. Durrington Walls) and contains technical languages (e.g. archeologist, ancient world). As a result,

the existence of these linguistic features has indicated that, to some degree, this text does not seem to fit the criteria of a descriptive text, but rather this text can be categorized as an explanation text.

## **Conclusions**

The focus of the research is analyzing the descriptive texts within English textbook entitled “*Bahasa Inggris for Senior High School Grade X*” in order to investigate to what extent those descriptive texts meet the criteria regarding its purpose, schematic structure and linguistic features (in terms of Transitivity system). The findings showed that in terms of purpose and schematic structure, Text 1, Text 2 and Text 3 in the textbook had fulfilled the criteria as descriptive text. However, in terms of linguistic features, only Text 1 and Text 3 successfully followed the linguistic features of descriptive text. As a result, it can be said that two of descriptive texts, Text 2 and Text 4, in English textbook entitled “*Bahasa Inggris*” were unsatisfactory in providing descriptive text as a model for teaching and learning processes, in which they did not satisfy the criteria of descriptive text.

Based on the findings and the discussions, there are some recommendations for teachers and further researchers in the SFL analysis of descriptive text in the textbook.

For teachers, they are encouraged to be more aware to schematic structure and processes applied in the text and they should be more selective in providing a text as a model in teaching and learning English. It is because what students read in textbook will later be applied in their learning process. Moreover, teachers should make sure that the texts in the textbook used for teaching and learning activities are relevant to the criteria of the texts themselves and also with their students’ ability. In order to investigate to what extent the texts meet their criteria, teachers can use Systemic Functional Linguistics framework analysis, particularly on Transitivity system. This system of analysis is used to reveal processes used in the texts and the overall meaning of the texts themselves. To some extent it can also reveal the complexity of the texts. Additionally, in terms of teaching descriptive, it is better for teacher to provide a model of descriptive text which consists of personal comment.

Furthermore, for further researchers, the research only focuses on the analysis of schematic structure, general linguistic features and Transitivity system of descriptive text. Thus, it is recommended for further studies the analysis to involve the logical meaning or conjunction system analysis to complete the ideational metafunction analysis. Moreover, it would be even better to analyze all the metafunction to attain complete depiction of meaning within descriptive text.

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