

## **Investigating Journalist's Language through Transitivity in Editorial of the Jakarta Post Newspaper: Systemic Functional Linguistics Perspective**

**Alya Rapiqah,  
Setyo Prasiyanto Cahyono**  
Universitas Dian Nuswantoro,  
Semarang  
[311202102317@mhs.dinus.ac.id](mailto:311202102317@mhs.dinus.ac.id)

### **ABSTRACT**

Transitivity, under Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), examines how actions, events, or relationships are presented in language, specifically in written text (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). This study explores the utilization of transitivity in presenting actions, events, and relationships in editorial discourse and to determine the most dominant process present in the text. This study utilizes a descriptive qualitative approach to explain the transitivity process of the text and its realization. The source of data in this study was gathered from editorial of the Jakarta Post newspaper published in April 2024. Meanwhile, in selecting the data, the researchers apply criterion-based sampling techniques, the data resulted in 2 editorials to analyze. In addition, this study employed Halliday's transitivity analysis framework to examine the type of processes found in the data including the participant, processes, and circumstances. The result of this study depict that material processes were the dominant processes found in the text. Furthermore, these findings offer a comprehension of how transitivity analysis, under Halliday's systemic functional linguistics framework, provides a spotlight on the rhetorical techniques and communicative objectives of editorial texts. This research enhances our comprehension of how editorial discourse forms perceptions, creates arguments, and impacts readers' interpretations by analyzing the relationship between language structure and meaning.

**Keywords:** editorial, processes, systemic functional linguistics, transitivity, the Jakarta post

## INTRODUCTION

Much like watching television, reading the newspaper is a daily habit for many people. It serves as their window to the world. News is a powerful medium that tells an accurate and reliable story (Richardson, cited in Abbas & Talaat, 2019). In today's modern world, newspapers are among the many sources of information (Ilyasova, 2022). They can influence people and change society's political, social, cultural, religious, and ethical aspects (El Houssine, 2022). However, the news printed in newspapers is not an absolute reality; it is a reality that is constructed and reinterpreted (Abbas & Talaat, 2019). There is always an underlying ideology behind it. Newspapers use their influence to shape perceptions, as media has become an industry where news acts like a commodity. Hence, newspapers serve as essential windows to the world, offering powerful yet constructed narratives that influence societal perspectives and shape public discourse.

In today's capitalist world, newspapers sell their stories to make a profit (Abbas & Talaat, 2019). They use language as a tool to run their business, and the language used is influenced by the goals and desires of those who control it (Bloor & Thomas, 1995). According to Kress (1985), language is shaped by the people who use it through words, phrases, and sentences; it never appears on its own and is always presented persuasively. Newspapers skilfully use language to do their business by influencing readers to buy their products, helping them earn profit. Newspaper groups conduct market research and understand their readership well (Reah, 2002).

Journalists are professionals in the news industry who aim to be objective and politically neutral, but their personal beliefs can greatly influence their decisions (Patterson & Donsbagh, 1996). They work across various media, including newspapers, where they research and write articles. Their job involves investigating stories, conducting interviews, and checking facts to ensure their reports are accurate. Journalists are committed to finding and presenting the truth to the public clearly and unbiasedly (Michailidou & Trenz, 2021). Journalism plays a key role in the use of power in modern societies, and how journalists report news has a significant impact on shaping public and private discussions (Godler & Reich, 2013). The language used in journalism can shape viewpoints, deliver the expected news, and influence public opinions through specific techniques and carefully chosen words and phrases (Fer, 2018). Their responsibility extends beyond just relaying information; they play a crucial role in fostering societal transparency and accountability. By upholding the integrity of their profession and contributing to informed public

conversation, journalists uphold the standards of thorough fact-checking and balanced reporting.

An editorial is a news story presenting an opinion similar to persuasive writing. It is written by or under the guidance of an editor from a news organization or media company, addressing important legal, social, economic, or political issues that concern the public. These editorials are shared through electronic media (like radio and television) or print media (like newspapers). Editorials reflect the newspaper's viewpoints, thoughts, or ideas on current issues (van Dijk, 1996). They assess what has been reported in the news and offer solutions when needed. Editorial columns in newspapers are the only spaces where news organizations can freely express their opinions on news events. The way language is used in these columns is connected to the media's ideological stance and attitude towards the issues. Caffarel-Cayron and Rechniewsk (2014) argue that editorials should showcase the ideologies and opinions of the news organization on specific issues, helping to persuade readers with strong arguments. Therefore, a news editorial acts as the voice of a social class or elite group and interprets what is reported in the news.

From the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) perspective, editorials can be analysed through the transitivity framework, which examines how experiences and realities are represented in language. Under Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), transitivity examines how actions, events, or relationships are presented in language, specifically in written text (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). SFL offers a comprehensive understanding of how texts like editorials construct meaning and influence readers. The transitivity framework in SFL includes the analysis of processes (such as material, mental, and verbal), participants, and circumstances used in the text. For instance, editorials often use verbal processes to express strong views or opinions and material processes to describe actions or events related to the issues discussed. Additionally, selecting participants in editorials, such as subjects given responsibility or those who are the focus of criticism, also plays a significant role in shaping readers' perceptions of the issue. By analysing the elements of transitivity in editorials, we can understand how media manipulate language to convey messages and effectively influence public opinion.

In this study, there are some previous studies have discussed transitivity analysis in newspapers. First, there is a study by Asad et al. (2019) entitled "Transitivity Analysis of Election Coverage in Online Newspapers of Malaysia & Pakistan: A Study with Critical Discourse Analysis & Systematic Functional Linguistics' Perspective." This study

examines the data using Transitivity Analysis from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by Halliday, building on Matthiessen's edited work (2014). The result shows that the independent online newspapers in both countries provide unbiased representation to all social actors. However, mainstream newspapers tend to use language that favors the interests of private political elites. The second study is "Transitivity analysis of newspaper's news headlines depicting crime committed against women in Pakistan" by Abbas and Talaat (2019). The article analyzes the word choices in headlines of Pakistani English newspapers reporting on crimes against women. The analysis focuses on how men and women are portrayed in the headlines and what roles the newspapers assign them. It also reveals the underlying beliefs in the chosen words and rhetorical devices. The article shows how the newspapers subtly evoke emotions in readers to grab their attention and shape their opinions.

This study on transitivity analysis in the editorial section of the Jakarta Post shares similarities with the two mentioned studies because we all employ transitivity analysis as an approach to scrutinize language use in newspapers. However, while the first study examines election coverage in Malaysia and Pakistan, the second focuses on crime against women in Pakistan. This study specifically targets the editorial content of the Jakarta Post entitled "Looking East" and "Same Old Singapore" which were published in April 2024, providing a localized analysis of how transitivity functions within the context of Indonesian journalism.

This study aims to identify and analyze transitivity patterns in The Jakarta Post editorials, uncovering how linguistic structures are used to shape narratives and influence readers. The findings of this research are expected to make a significant contribution to media linguistics studies, particularly in the context of journalistic language in Indonesia, and offer practical insights for journalists on more effective language use and awareness of its ideological impacts.

## **METHOD**

This study used a descriptive qualitative methodology and the transitivity framework from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to analyze the language used by journalists in the Jakarta Post's editorial section. Purposive sampling is used to choose data from editorial texts that highlight social and political concerns in Indonesia. Two editorials, titled "Looking East" and "Same Old Singapore" were chosen as the source of the data in this study. Both were published in April 2024. Using Halliday's transitivity approach (2014), each text in the chosen editorials is divided into clauses

and categorized according to participant roles, processes, and circumstances aspects. In order to pinpoint certain language patterns, the frequencies of the various transitivity components are then measured and displayed in percentage tables. The results are analyzed to comprehend the subtleties of journalistic language in expressing social and political issues, and a thorough conclusion that clarifies the salient features and ramifications of the language employed in the editorials follows.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the results gained from analyzing data within editorial text. The attention is primarily on two editorials titled "Looking East" and "Same Old Singapore."

Table 1:  
 Transitivity analysis on two editorials by The Jakarta Post published in April, 2024.

Types of Processes	1 <sup>st</sup> Editorial		2 <sup>nd</sup> Editorial	
	Findings	Percentage	Findings	Percentage
<b>Material</b>	18	32,1%	18	46,2%
<b>Mental</b>	17	30,4%	7	17,9%
<b>Verbal</b>	8	14,3%	4	10,2%
<b>Relational</b>	12	21,4%	9	23,1%
<b>Existential</b>	1	1,8%	1	2,6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to the table, the first article contains 56 clauses of editorial text titled "looking east". The predominant form of process is material processing, which represents 32,1% of the total occurrences. Following that, mental processes represent 30,4% of the occurrences, relational processes occur 12 times (21,4%), verbal processes occur 8 times (14,3%), and existential processes occur once (1,8%). The second article, titled

"Same Old Singapore," contains a total of 39 specified clauses. These clauses are categorized as follows: 18 instances of material processes (46,2%), 9 occurrences (23,1%) of relational processes, 7 occurrences (17,6%) of mental processes, 4 occurrences (10,2%) of verbal processes, and 1 occurrence (2,6%) of existential processes.

After conducting the analysis, the researcher identified 56 clauses in the editorial titled "Looking East" and 39 clauses in the editorial titled "Same Old Singapore". The analysis of these two editorials showed that there were five types of processes which were material, mental, verbal, relational, and existential processes. This chapter offers comprehensive explanations of specific particular examples of processes identified within the data analyzed.

### **A. Material Process**

Acts and events are the focus of material processes. They explain events that take place in the real world, usually with an actor (the person carrying out the action) and a goal (the thing that is impacted by the action).

#### **a. Excerpt 1**

That Prabowo will go to Washington, (1st Editorial)

In this sentence, Prabowo is described as a doer—someone who will take action to strengthen his leadership. Here, the action is "will go", which indicates a plan to carry out an activity and thus constitutes a material process. "to Washington" is the stated aim of the measure, indicating where Prabowo wanted to go. As a result, this sentence describes the material process in which Prabowo, who acts as an actor, takes action to strengthen Indonesia's leadership in ASEAN.

#### **b. Excerpt 2**

When he officially takes the helm of Singapore on May 15, (2nd Editorial)

In this sentence, "he" refers to Prabowo who is the doer and the one who performs the action. The process of becoming material is "takes the helm," Prabowo which means taking control or leadership. This phrase describes the physical act of assuming a leadership role by Prabowo. This sentence also contains a temporal context, "on May 15," which specifies when the action will occur. Therefore, this sentence falls under the material process category as it focuses on the action of the actor taking over the reins.

## **B. Mental Process**

Internal experiences, including thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and wants, are the subject of mental processes. These procedures usually include two parties: a phenomenon (the thing that is felt, thought, or perceived) and a sensor (the person who experiences the mental state).

### **a. Excerpt 3**

Prabowo knows this (1st Editorial)

Since this sentence describes an internal state or mental activity rather than a physical action, it belongs in the category of mental processes. The cognitive or mental process of perceiving, sensing, or knowing something is the main emphasis of this kind of process. Prabowo is one who sees, who experiences, who feels, or who has knowledge. 'Knowing' is a mental activity; it is the cognitive act of comprehending something or learning something. Given that knowledge is a mental state rather than a physical action, the word "know" suggests that Prabowo possessed knowledge or insight.

### **b. Excerpt 4**

During his campaign, Prabowo expressed an intention to play a more global role while sticking with ASEAN as his foreign policy base. (2nd Editorial)

This sentence is classified as a mental process because it describes Prabowo's inner intentions and decision-making state, not his physical actions. Mental processes focus on thoughts, beliefs, intentions and attitudes. Prabowo is a sensor or experiencer. The mental process is "declaring intentions," which represents Prabowo's cognitive action of stating or declaring his future plans. The phrase "to play a more global role while sticking with ASEAN as his foreign policy base" is the content of Prabowo's intention, what he wants to achieve and how he will achieve it. This statement reflects Prabowo's strategic thinking and views on international relations, making it a clear example of a mental process.

## **C. Verbal Process**

Saying, telling, asking, and other verbal communication are examples of verbal processes. A sayer (the person speaking), a receiver (the one being spoken to), and verbiage (the information being said) are usually involved in these procedures.

### **a. Excerpt 5**

Xi also told Prabowo (1st Editorial)

This sentence represents communication between two people, hence it falls within the verbal process category. In verbal processes, language transfers information, thoughts, or messages from one person (the sayer) to another (the receiver). Since he is the one speaking, "Xi" is the sayer or speaker. The verbal process is "told," denoting the act of giving information, instructions or opinions to another person. The recipient of the communication, or the person to whom Xi is addressing or informing, is the direct object of the verb "Prabowo". The statement emphasizes the verbal conversation between these two people, highlighting the information exchange.

**b. Excerpt 6**

Lee announced his resignation on Monday afternoon. (2nd Editorial)

This falls within the verbal process category since it details Lee's act of conveying his important resignation decision. According to systemic functional linguistics, verbal processes refer to exchanging ideas, messages, or information between individuals through language. "Lee" refers to the speaker or actor delivering the spoken action in this line. "Announced" implies that Lee is using words to inform people of his resignation formally, so he is making a formal statement. "His resignation" is the direct object that indicates the precise topic or subject matter of Lee's declaration, which is the content of his communication.

**D. Relation Process**

Relational processes deal with relationships or states of being between different entities. Relational processes that are attributed provide entities' characteristics or traits. They comprise an attribute (the property or description) and a carrier (the entity being described).

**a. Excerpt 7**

The feeling was mutual (1st Editorial)

This statement falls within the attributive category of the relational process. Relational processes explain characteristics, relationships, or states of being. The relational verb "was" in this sentence establishes a connection between the subject "the feeling" and the attribute "mutual," signifying that two or more persons share the feeling. A relationship is considered "mutual" when people feel the same way about each other. It emphasizes the shared understanding or attitude between the parties concerned and implies a state of agreement or alignment in feelings or beliefs. This relational process emphasizes the trait or feature of the



returned feeling, emphasizing the essence of the relationship more than particular behaviors or occurrences.

**b. Excerpt 8**

China is the most important trading and economic partner for all members of ASEAN (2nd Editorial)

The sentence falls under the category of the intensive type of relational process. The phrase refers to a characteristic or situation characterizing China's interactions with ASEAN nations. It draws attention to China's important role in assisting all of the ASEAN member countries in trade and economic matters. This relational process, which emphasizes the nature of the relationship more than particular actions or occurrences, highlights China's position and significance in the ASEAN economic framework.

**E. Existential Process**

**a. Excerpt 9**

There will be no meaningful hurdles in the relationship between the two neighbors (1st Editorial)

This sentence falls under the existential process category. The assertion of something's existence or occurrence is accomplished through existential processes. The term "there will be," which states that a condition or state exists, indicates the existential structure of this sentence. The claim that there won't be any major roadblocks or difficulties in the two neighbors' friendship is the main point of emphasis. The assertion of what exists or does not exist is made using the phrase "no meaningful hurdles in the relationship between the two neighbors as the existing. It explains the current situation with reference to the unneighborly connection, highlighting the lack of major challenges.

**b. Excerpt 10**

There is a growing concern over the imbalanced economic ties between the two countries. (2nd Editorial)

The word "there is" serves as an existential structure in this sentence, pointing out the presence of a particular concern or problem. This statement clarifies the assertion that there is growing concern or uneasiness regarding the uneven economic links between the two countries. Instead of describing a behavior or mental state, the statement highlights the existence of a concern in the context of economic ties and underlines its presence inside the discourse.

## **Discussion**

The examination of transitivity in the editorials demonstrates a prominent occurrence of Material Processes, accounting for 32.1% in the first editorial and 46.2% in the second. This indicates that journalists give their priorities to report on concrete situation and events. This utilization guarantees transparency and objectivity by focusing on concrete and provable activities, creating the news more relevant and persuasive for readers. Furthermore, it improves the reliability of the news, as readers are inclined to have greater faith in reports that are grounded with verifiable occurrences. The results align with the findings of Asad et al. (2019), who observed that independent online newspapers in Malaysia and Pakistan present impartial portrayals by prioritizing factual reporting. Whereas, Abbas and Talaat (2019) show that the use of words in headlines can influence the readers' perspective in obtaining the information. In this way, the journalists employ material processes to elicit particular emotions and responses. Therefore, this study confirms investigations by Abbas and Talaat (2019), demonstrating that journalists employ Material Processes to create compelling and powerful narratives that not only provide information but also shape public opinion, while upholding journalistic ethics and shaping public conversation.

## **CONCLUSION**

The examination of the two editorials, "Looking East" and "Same Old Singapore," demonstrates that material processes are mostly used, emphasizing the concentration on actions and events executed by state officials and their geopolitical maneuvers. The proportion of material processes in the sentences is 32.1% in "Looking East" and 46.2% in "Same Old Singapore." Mental, verbal, and relational processes play a crucial role in reflecting internal experiences, conversations, and relationships between things. Existential processes, while occurring less often, serve as indicators of the existence or non-existence of specific situations or worries. The extensive utilization of diverse procedures offers a thorough comprehension of the dynamics and viewpoints conveyed in the editorials, demonstrating the intricacies of regional leadership, diplomatic objectives, and economic associations within the ASEAN context.

## REFERENCES

- Abbas, M. A., & Talaat, M. (2019). Transitivity analysis of newspapers' news headlines depicting crime committed against women in Pakistan. *International Journal of English Linguistics*.
- Asad, S., Noor, S. N. F. B. M., & Jaes, L. B. (2019). Transitivity analysis of election coverage in online newspapers of Malaysia & Pakistan: a study with critical discourse analysis & systematic functional linguistics perspective. *Amazonia Investiga*.
- Bloor, M., & Thomas, B. (1995). *The Functional Analysis of English: A Hallidayan Approach*. London: Arnold.
- Caffarel-Cayron, A., & Rechniewski, E. (2014). Exploring the generic structure of French editorials from the perspective of systemic functional linguistics. *Journal of World Languages*.
- El Houssine, E. F. (2022). Transitivity analysis of newspapers' headlines depicting the Russian attack on Ukraine. *International Journal of Linguistics and Translation Studies*.
- Fer, S. (2018). The Language of Journalism: Particularities and Interpretation of Its Coexistence with Other Languages. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3128134>.
- Godler, Y., & Reich, Z. (2013). How Journalists Think About Facts. *Journalism Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2012.689489>.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C.M.I.M. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar (4th ed.)*. Routledge.
- Ilyasova, A., & Ganzhelyuk, P. (2022). English Borrowings in The Newspaper Political Discourse of Russia: How They Help to Teach Language? *Proceedings of ADVED 2022- 8th International Conference on Advances in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.47696/adved.202220>.
- Kress, G. (1985). *Ideological Structures in Discourse*. In T. A. Van Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

- Michailidou, A., & Trenz, H. (2021). Rethinking journalism standards in the era of post-truth politics: from truth keepers to truth mediators. *Media, Culture & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437211040669>.
- Patterson, T., & Donsbagh, W. (1996). News decisions: Journalists as partisan actors. *Political Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.1996.9963131>.