



RESEARCH ARTICLE

ANALYSIS OF EXPERIENTIAL MEANING IN DEDENG FOLKTALE

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 20th January, 2023

Received in revised form

24th February, 2023

Accepted 25th March, 2023

Published online 18th April, 2023

Key words:

Experiential Meaning, Transitivity Elements, Dedeng folktales, Processes, Participants, Circumstances.

ABSTRACT

A text is the representation of human experience created to convey a certain meaning, composed of several elements known as transitivity elements, including process, participant, and circumstance. This study aimed to find out the experiential meaning of *Dedeng* folktales text. This study was conducted using a descriptive method, taking *Dedeng* folktales as the central phenomenon to be studied. The data of this study were all clauses in *Dedeng* folktales, collected using a document method. The data were analyzed using an interactive model and a frequency analysis method that showed the number of occurrences of each transitivity element in the text. The results of this study found that material processes are the type of process most frequently used in the text with the percentage of 46.5%. In terms of participants, human participant is most frequently used with the percentage of 74.82%. Meanwhile, circumstance of place dominates the use of circumstances in the text with the frequency of 44.6%. It is concluded that *Dedeng* folktales is a text that highlights actions performed by the character in the story.

INTRODUCTION

Meaning has an important role both in spoken and written texts because it reflects messages that the speakers or writers intend to deliver. Meaning is realized in the three language metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunction. The three language metafunctions are mapped onto the structure of the clause. Ideational metafunction is used to represent experiences, interpersonal metafunction is used to enact diverse relationships, and textual metafunction is used to organize texts (Eggins, 1994; Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The ideational metafunction is further divided into experiential and logical metafunctions. The experiential metafunction refers to the grammatical choices that represent experiences, while the logical metafunction refers to the logical-semantic relationships between one clausal unit and the others. The grammatical choices are realized in a transitivity system that includes process, participant, and circumstance (Eggins, 1994; Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Based on the experiential metafunction, a text is composed of different types of transitivity elements. The dominant use of certain types of transitivity elements characterizes different text types; in other words, types of transitivity elements become one of the criteria of categorizing texts into several types.

For example, several previous studies have confirmed that material and verbal processes are the dominant processes in news item texts (Valeria, 2015; Wahyudin, 2016; Yusuf *et al.*, 2021), relational and existential processes in descriptive texts (Fiscarina, 2021; Rohmat *et al.*, 2018), and material processes in narrative and recount texts (Jelimun *et al.*, 2020; Nurlela *et al.*, 2020; Qasim *et al.*, 2018; Rosa *et al.*, 2018). These previous findings confirmed the existing literature that grammar helps us to understand how texts work (Gerot & Wignell, 1994). Besides, these previous studies provide an opportunity for further research to study on the transitivity elements in other text types. Analyzing experiential metafunction is useful to make us understand what and how the messages in a text are conveyed by the writer(s). In doing an analysis on the experiential meaning, the grammar of clauses is seen as the representation to construe the experiences. Each text is developed by clauses; clauses develop paragraph, and so on, paragraphs build a long text. A text brings its own meaning (Halliday, 1994). One of the examples of a text is *Dedeng* folktales, a story as of the representation of the writers' experience. *Dedeng* is one of the folktales coming from Langkat District. In the story, the writers expressed everything they know based on their experience. In this context, experience refers to all activities which are done physically or mentally or anything information obtained from any sources. All forms of experiences are represented in a language, realized in the form of clauses, the core of text analysis based on the SFL theory. The clause consists of (i) Process, the main clause element which states the experience; (ii) Participant, the clause element bound by

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the process whose types are entirely dependent on the process; and (iii) Circumstance, the additional clause element which gives information when, where, or how something is done (Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Halliday, 1994; Rosa *et al.*, 2008). Analyzing the experiential meaning of the *Dedeng* text reveals how the writers represent their experience. *Dedeng* has become the focus of the previous studies; however, none of them analyzed it from linguistics perspectives. *Dedeng* was analyzed from a literature point of view (Umry, 2014) and from an anthropology point of view (Harianto II *et al.*, 2017; Sujatmoko & Ayuningtias, 2017; Utami *et al.*, 2022). They explored the local wisdom contained in the *Dedeng* folktales. These previous studies gap the left that can be filled in by the present study. As *Dedeng* is a text, it can certainly become an object of studies in linguistics. This present study analyzes *Dedeng* from systemic functional linguistics point of view, by employing the experiential metafunction theory. Thus, this present study aimed to find out the types of processes, participants, and circumstances used in the *Dedeng* folktales.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The experiential meaning refers to the grammatical resources involved in construing the flux of experience through the unit of the clause (Halliday, 1994). This means that the experiential meaning deals with the grammatical choices that enable people to make meaning about the world around them. It focuses on the field, the topic of the message, rather than the purposes of the speakers or writers regarding the interaction. Furthermore, it refers to how the world is represented by the participants of a conversation through language, involving actions (verbs), things (nouns), attributes of those things (adjectives), and details of background details of place, manner, time, etc. (adverbials). An analysis of a text from the perspective of the experiential function involves inquiring into the choices in the grammatical systems of “transitivity” (Halliday, 1973). The term transitivity is probably familiar as a way of distinguishing between verbs according to whether they have an object or not. It is a proper of verb that relates to whether a verb can take direct object and how many such objects a verb can take. There are three basic elements to all process structures of transitivity; the process itself, the participant in the process, and the circumstances associated with the process. Martin *et al.* (1997) argue that transitivity is a resource for construing human’s experience in terms of configurations of a process, participant, and circumstances. This idea confirms Halliday (1994) who proposed that “transitivity is a system that construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types”. The same idea also expressed by Butt *et al.* (2000) who state that “most English clauses have a constituent structure that can be described functionally in terms of participant, process, and circumstance with process being the essential ingredient”. The ideas mentioned above agree to propose that transitivity is a system that divides a clause into three elements: process, participant, and circumstance. Among the three elements of a clause, Gerot and Wignell (1995) argue that “processes are central to transitivity”; in other words, the meaning of a clause mainly depends on the process of the clause. Participant and circumstance are incumbent upon process. It indicates different processes suggest different participants in varying circumstances. This can be concluded that transitivity is a system that construes the world of experience for describing the whole clause with a set of process types as its central. There are six types of processes in the meaning of experience which functioned to describe activities or what happened in the

clauses. First, a material process is a type of process used to express a verb that refers to a physical or bodily activity carried out by the participant. Second, a mental process is a process of sensing, including the process of feeling, thinking, and perceiving. Third, relational process is a process of being and possessing. Relational processes serve to characterize (attributing) and to identify (identifying) the clause participants. Fourth, a behavioral process is used to express a verb that refers to physiological and physiological processes. Fifth, verbal process is used to express the process of saying, usually used in direct and indirect speeches. Sixth, existential process is used to express a verb that refers to the existence or presence of something or someone with the existence characteristics of “there”. A process binds a participant in a clause; in other words, the choice of participant is entirely dependent on the process. Thus, participant is the term generally used to refer to entities involved in a process. It can be a person, a place, or an object. In the grammar of a clause the participant is realized by a nominal group. The relationship between a process and a participant in a clause is explained in the clauses (1) – (4).

1	Douglas	Opened	the door
	Actor	Process: Material	Goal
2	He	Told	the truth
	Sayer	Process: Verbal	Verbiage
3	That	Was	his daily activity
	Token	Process: Identifying	Value
4	Parents	Love	their children.
	Senser	Process: Mental	Phenomenon

The clauses in (1) – (4) show that the types of participants entirely depend upon the type of processes. The material process, for example, require the participants in the form of Actor (Participant 1) and Goal (Participant 2). Meanwhile, the verbal process requires Sayer and Verbiage as the participants; the identifying process requires Token and Value as the participants; and the mental process requires Senser and Phenomenon as the participants. The other transitivity element is circumstance. Circumstantial meanings are expressed through adverbial groups or prepositional phrases. Circumstances are the conditions in which processes are occurring. Circumstances also answer such questions as when, where, why, how, how many, and so forth. The types of circumstance are time, location, manner, cause, accompaniment, role, matter, and angle (Derewianka, 1990; Gerrot & Wignell, 1994). Circumstance of time: can be defined as an ongoing and continuous sequence of events that occur in succession, from past through the present, and to the future, while circumstance of location describes the position or site occupied or available for occupancy. The next is circumstance of manner which clarifies the way how the process happens or is done. Then, circumstance of cause describe show a person or thing gives rise to an action, phenomenon, or condition. Moreover, circumstance of contingency explains an event occurs or is done under certain circumstances. The other circumstance is accompaniment, which explains the participants or the processes are accompanied by other things or persons. Next, circumstance of role: is used to show that the function is assumed to be conducted by a person or thing in a given action or process. Another circumstance is matter that explains about what or with reference to what, and is probed by what about?.

The last type is circumstance of angle, which explains a particular way of approaching or considering an issue or problem.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Materials

The materials of this study were the *Dedeng* story, one of the well-known folktales coming from Langkat District. Although it is only a fiction, the story has relevance to the lives of people from the past to the present. For example, *Dedeng* offers the readers an understanding of a father who had a very bad character, who was irresponsible to his pregnant wife by leaving her alone and her baby in the womb. *Dedeng* tells a story about a young man coming from the island of Kwala Serapuh. The title of the story was taken from the name of the main character in the story, i.e., *Dedeng*. When he was still in the womb, his father abandoned him. When he had been born, he was raised by his mother alone. Her mother passed away when he was still a child. He grew up and became a healthy, handsome young man. Together with his adoptive mother, they moved to Kampai Island in order to improve their family income because the sea surrounding this island produced many kinds of fish.

Dedeng could sing beautiful poetries. In the story it was also told that there was a princess named Putri Bulan. She lived on the island of Kampai, and she was a stunning woman. She was the daughter of Datuk PulauKampai, the king of Kampai Island. Princess Bulan liked singing poetry as well. *Dedeng* and Putri Bulan always meet, because they like singing poetry together. Having known their closeness, Datuk PulauKampai was angry and expelled *Dedeng* from the island. However, *Dedeng* and Putri Bulan continued seeing each other despite the ban from Datuk PulauKampai. Then, Datuk Pulau Kampai intended to kill *Dedeng*. Finally, *Dedeng*'s foster mother went to Datuk Pulau Kampai and told him that the young man that he was planning to kill was his own son from the wife he had left on Kuala Serapuh Island. Knowing this, he was very shocked and stopped his intention to kill *Dedeng*. *Dedeng* also felt very shocked when knowing Putri Bulan, the girl he loved very much, was his sister. *Dedeng* did not believe it. Finally, *Dedeng* left Kampai Island and swore he would never be married in his life.

Method

This research used a descriptive method, a type of research that provides an overview or description of a situation as clear as possible, without any treatment of the object under study. This method was in line with analyzing *Dedeng* folktale. The data were all clauses obtained from *Dedeng Folktale*. This research focused on the experiential meaning based on the Halliday's metafunction theory, which stated that the core of analysis were clauses. It consisted of three constituents namely: Process, Participant, and Circumstance. The data source was taken from *Langkat's Folktales* documented by Language Development and Fostering Agency, Language Center of North Sumatra, Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. There were five stories found in the folktales, but the researchers chose only one story, i.e., *Dedeng*. This story was selected because it contained a good message in terms of moral values.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of data analysis proposed by Miles *et al.* (2014) model (see Figure 1). It is an interactive model of data analysis that divided into 3 parts namely: 1) Data Condensation, 2) Data Display, 3) Conclusion: drawing/verifying.

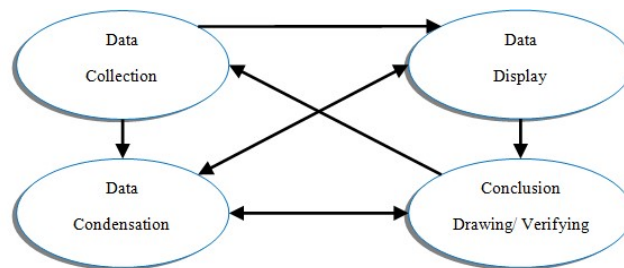


Figure 1. Interactive model of data analysis (Miles *et al.*, 2014)

Data condensation referred to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and/or transforming the data that appear in the full corpus (body) of written-up field notes, interviews, transcript, documents, and other empirical materials (Miles *et al.*, 2014). In selecting the data, the researchers chose all clauses in the story text of *Dedeng*. Focusing was meant to focus on the data that lead to the problem solving, meaning, and answering the research questions. In this section the researcher focused on the clauses in the story text "*Dedeng*" in order to find out kinds of the transitivity process. Then doing simplifying by making the data simpler and easier to be understood. In this case the researcher simplified the clauses by giving the labeling to distinguish the kinds of transitivity. Abstracting means considering the data theoretically or separately. To do this the researcher only used the data which was based on the existing theories about transitivity system. Transforming means to make a through or stories change in form and appearance. The researcher transformed the transitivity into tables. The data display phase was done in the form of graphics. The graph was the results of data analysis using the statistical method in which all the data were analyzed to find out the frequency of occurrence of each element of the transitivity in the text. Finally, the researcher concluded the transitivity in Langkat's Folktales Story text *Dedeng*. The conclusion was done after the data analysis had been verified.

RESULTS

After applying the data condensation stage, the writers found 200 clauses as the data. The distribution and the frequency of each element of the transitivity system are displayed in Table 1. The results displayed in Table 1 indicate that Material Process is the process with the highest frequency used in the story with the percentage of 46,5%. The second most frequent type of the process is Relational Process with the percentage of 23,5%, where Attributing Process contributes 14%, Identifying Process contributes 7.5%, and Possession Process contributes 2%. The third most frequent type of the process is Mental Process with the percentage of 20,5%, where Cognition Process, Affection Process, Perception Process, and Desirability Process contribute 3.5%, 9%, 5.5%, and 2.5%, respectively. Meanwhile, the other three types of processes used less frequently in the story. The Verbal Process is used 16 times (8%), the Behavioural Process is used 2 times (1%), and the Existential Process was used only 1 time (0.5%). These findings indicate that the *Dedeng* folktale is a story that

Table 1. The frequency of processes used in *Dedengfolktale*

No.	Process	Sub-Process	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Material				93	46.5%
2	Mental	Perception	7	3.5%	41	20.5%
		Cognition	18	9%		
		Affection	11	5.5%		
		Desirability	5	2.5%		
3	Relational	Attributing	28	14%	47	23.5%
		Identifying	15	7.5%		
		Possession	4	2%		
4	Verbal				16	8%
5	Behavioural				2	1%
6	Existential				1	0.5%
Total					200	100%

Table 2. Human and non-human Participants I in *Dedeng folktale*

No.	Participant I	Sub- Participants	Frequency	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1	Actor	Human	50	33.11%	52	34.44%
		Non-human	2	1.33%		
2	Senser	Human	31	20.53%	32	21.19%
		Non-human	1	0.66%		
3	Behaver	Human	4	2.65%	4	2.65%
		Non-human	0	0.00%		
4	Carrier	Human	23	15.23%	29	19.20%
		Non-human	6	3.97%		
5	Token	Human	7	4.64%	14	9.28%
		Non-human	7	4.64%		
6	Possessor	Human	4	2.65%	4	2.65%
		Non-human	0	0.00%		
7	Sayer	Human	14	9.27%	15	9.93%
		Non-human	1	0.66%		
8	Existent	Human	0	0.00%	1	0.66%
		Non-human	1	0.66%		
Total					151	100%

Table 3. Human and non-human Participants II in *Dedeng folktale*

No.	Participant II	Sub- Participants	Frequency	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1	Recipient	Human	8	5.93%	8	5.93%
		Non-human	0	0.00%		
2	Goal	Human	25	18.52%	44	32.59%
		Non-human	19	14.07%		
3	Phenomenon	Human	7	5.19%	14	10.38%
		Non-human	7	5.19%		
4	Attribute	Human	21	15.56%	33	24.44%
		Non-human	12	8.88%		
5	Value	Human	7	5.19%	11	8.15%
		Non-human	4	2.96%		
6	Possessed	Human	1	0.74%	3	2.22%
		Non-human	2	1.48%		
7	Verbiage	Human	5	3.70%	10	7.40%
		Non-human	5	3.70%		
8	Receiver	Human	1	0.74%	1	0.74%
		Non-human	0	0.00%		
9	Beneficient	Human	2	1.48%	2	1.48%
		Non-human	0	0.00%		
10	Range	Human	0	0.00%	9	6.67%
		Non-human	9	6.67%		
Total					135	100%

highlights the actions performed by the story characters. Besides, the characters of the story are well-informed. This is indicated by the frequent use of relational processes. In addition, the findings show that the story lacks conversation among the characters. This is indicated by the less frequent use of verbal processes in the story. Some examples of transitivity analysis in the *Dedeng folktale* can be seen in clauses (5) – (9).

5	He	arrived home	cheerfully
	Actor	Pro. Material	Circ. Manner

6	That	was	his daily activity
	Token	Pro. Identifying	Value

7	Dedeng	was	a good looking and kind hearted man
	Carrier	Pro. Attributing	Attribute

8	Seeing		her loved
	Pro. Mental Perception		Phenomenon

9	and thrown out	to the sea,
	Pro. Material	Circ. Place

Some examples of transitivity analysis in the *Dedeng* folktale can be seen in clauses (5) – (9). The clauses in (5) – (9) show that the different processes use different names of participant. Besides, the processes must not always be accompanied by two types of participants. The clause in (5), for example, is built with the material process “arrived”, and it only has one participant, i.e., Actor. Meanwhile the clause in (6) has two participants for the identifying process “was”. The first participant is “That” as the Token, and the second participant is “his daily activity” as the Value. As mentioned in the literature review, the core of every clause is the Process, and it binds all the Participants involved in the activity or the process of the clause. The results of data analysis on the types of Participants I distinguish human participants from non-human participants, as displayed in Table 2. The findings displayed in Table 2 show that the clauses in the *Dedeng* text are composed of 151 Participants I. When compared to the total number of clauses, some of the clauses do not have Participant I. This indicates that the processes do not always bind Participant I, some of the processes can only bind Participant II. The findings also show that human participants dominated the types of participants in the *Dedeng* text. The other findings of this study also present the types of Participants II used in the *Dedeng* text, as displayed in Table 3. The findings in Table 3 indicate that Participant II in the clauses of *Dedeng* text is also dominated by human participants. This means that the story tells the interaction mostly between human and human. The other findings of this study reveal the types of circumstances used in the *Dedeng* text. Circumstances play an essential role in the story as they provide more detailed descriptions of the plot of the story. The processes reveal the main event, but circumstances explain the event in a more specific way. The findings related to the use of circumstances in the *Dedeng* text are displayed in Table 4. There are only 3 types of circumstances frequently used in the *Dedeng* text: Circumstance of Place is used 35 times (42.68%), the highest of all. The second most frequent is Circumstance of Time with the frequency of 22 times (26.83%), and the third most frequent is Circumstance of Manner with the frequency of 15 times (18.29%). The other types of circumstances are used much less frequently: Circumstance of Accompaniment (4.88%), Circumstance of Matter (3.66%), Circumstance of Role (2.44%), and Circumstance of Cause (1.22%). Meanwhile, both Circumstance of Contingency and Circumstance of Angle are not used at all in the *Dedeng* text.

DISCUSSION

From the finding above, it is identified that transitivity system of clauses in the *Dedeng* folktale text is composed of Processes, Participant and Circumstances. The process that are most frequently used in the text is material process. This finding is consistent with the findings of the previous studies (Jelimun *et al.*, 2020; Nurlela *et al.*, 2020; Qasim *et al.*, 2018) that material processes dominate the use of processes in narrative texts. Such consistency is caused by the same text type. This study used a *Dedeng* text, which is categorized as a narrative text, and the previous findings also used narratives as the data source. In addition, the findings of this study support Winarto (2018) who also found material process as the dominant process used in the Indonesian folktale entitled “The Origin of Landak River”.

These findings then strengthen the theory that the folktale text is dominated by the use of material processes. The frequency of Relational Process in folktale of *Dedeng* is relatively high. The frequent use of relational processes indicate that the writers of the text provide comprehensive details of the characters of the story. This is consistent with the previous study (Rosa, 2017) who found that relational processes are mostly used to introduce characters of the story. Introducing characters in a story helps the readers easily understand the story. This finding also confirms the previous studies concerning the important role of characters in a story. Pope (2005) argue that characters give an important role to make the story more alive. The frequency of mental processes in folktale shows that the participants in the text involved a mental activity and do have a potential of thought. In the context of a story, mental processes are frequently used to tell the story character’s feelings. This is consistent with the previous study done by Syed *et al.* (2020) who found that the use of mental processes in a story is to create perception and feelings of the main characters. They also add that mental processes are used to make the readers feel the intensity of the character’s emotions. In terms of the clause participants, human participants dominate the types of participants in the *Dedeng* text. This finding indicate that the interactions told in the story are mostly among the story characters. There are intense human interactions highlighted in the story. In relation to material processes, most of the actions are done by human as the actor, and the action is also addressed to human as the goal. In relation to mental processes, the phenomenon felt by the characters is dominated by human participant. The next finding reveals that circumstances of place is the most frequent type of circumstances used in the *Dedeng* text. It means that Langkat’s folktales want to introduce several places or areas that used to belong to Langkat District in the old days. Besides, it is also used to introduce the geographical area of the Langkat areas. The most dominant place is Island, the main setting of the story. This confirmed the previous literature about the location of Langkat District is in the coastal areas (Eriza, 2006; Pagar *et al.*, 2020). This is a very good decision since the story does not only entertain the readers but it also helps make the areas of Langkat District known by a wider audience.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it is concluded that the story in the *Dedeng* folktale text is represented by the transitivity elements of its clauses. The dominant use of the material processes reveals the characteristics of the story that presents the journey experienced by the characters. The story also frequently expresses the characters’ feelings through the frequent use of mental processes. The dominant use of human participants indicates that the story prefers to present human interactions rather than human-non human interactions. Moreover, the dominant use of circumstance of place is intended to introduce the readers not only to the story but also to the geographical areas of Langkat District. This is just a small study on the use of experiential metafunction in one of the folktales in Langkat District, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. There are many other folktales in other regencies in Indonesia and in other countries. Therefore, it is suggested to other researchers to conduct a similar study in other regions. Besides, the other researchers can conduct a study on the other language metafunctions to provide different views of how folktales are written.

Glossary of Abbreviations

SFL	: Systemic Functional Linguistics
Pro.	: Process
Circ.	: Circumstance

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