

Research Article

The Contributions of Systemic Functional Linguistics to Literary Text Analysis

Arsen Nahum Pasaribu^{1*}, Erika Sinambela² and Sondang Manik³

¹Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Languages and Arts, University of HKBP Nommensen, Medan, Indonesia

²Senior Lecturer, Postgraduate Program, University of HKBP Nommensen, Medan, Indonesia

³Professor, Postgraduate Program, University of HKBP Nommensen, Medan, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Arsen Nahum Pasaribu, E-mail: arsen.pasaribu@uhn.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Article History

Received: August 12, 2020

Accepted: September 22, 2020

Volume: 3

Issue: 9

DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2020.3.9.8

KEYWORDS

Discourse analysis, contributions,
literary text, SFL

ABSTRACT

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) refers to some kind of text analysis, including an analysis of literary language. Some research has verified the study of the literary text using this linguistic apparatus; however, the use of SFL in literary text analysis is relatively rare. Therefore, this study investigated the contributions of SFL to literary text analysis. The data of the study were 20 scientific articles focusing on literary text analysis using SFL. The analysis used content analysis to expose the segments of the story analyzed and the components of SFL to analyze them. The findings showed that the method of analysis using SFL on the literary text has brought new perspectives to the researchers, and provided some possible future studies in literary works. Moreover, the study of literary texts is regarded not merely as interpretative practices but as explanatory categories for each segment of a literary text.

1. Introduction

Systemic Functional Linguistics is a linguistic approach, which examines language as a social semiotic system. It's influenced the process of text analysis since the advent of SFL. From the SFL perspective, a text is viewed not merely as a unit of sentence construction rule, but also as an entity that is inseparable from its social context in meaning-making. Martin, at. al. (2010, p. 2) highlighted the main aim of SFL development to provide general grammar and text analysis interpretation, including literary language. Furthermore, Eggins (2000, p. 309) stressed that SFL works not only to interpret the meaning of literary works as the traditional method does but also to explain why the authors wrote the literary works as they are. SFL is therefore of prime importance in literary analysis as it explores how language as a system works by using linguistic patterns to create literary work, and reveals how and why the text means what it does to the reader or listener.

Some studies have confirmed some efforts in applying SFL to the literary text analysis. In literary analysis, Guo (2008) suggested the use of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), an SFL grammar. Gallardo (2006) explored the genre's roles in "Pygmalion" by examining linguistic resources used by the two main characters and the narrator. Lukin (2008) provided many examples of ways SFG application in the study of literary text at school. By examining graphology, sound, experiential, and textual patterns, he encouraged students to investigate poems. Lukin (2008, p. 85) argued that the literary text is treated like any other text appropriate to the SFL approach as a linguistic object. Cunanan (2011) used Woolf's SFG analysis on "Old Mrs. Grey" to explain the link between Woolf's word choice and the reader's intuition and impression. Besides, Slater and McCrocklin (2006) provided the students with training on the approach to the literary analysis of the SFG. This evidence has shown the rise in the use of SFL in literary analysis.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic Functional Linguistics is a language theory, initially introduced by Michael Halliday (1961; 1985). The focus of this Hallidayan theory is on how language is used to construct three types of meanings. The types comprise of ideational

metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, and textual metafunction. The Ideational or experiential metafunction is concerned with the presentation of social realities. Interpersonal metafunction is the exchange of social communication to establish the relationship. The category of organizing mode of communication is the textual metafunction. Following is a further explanation of the metafunction.

2.2. Ideational Metafunction

Ideational metafunction is the source that enables us to encode our mental image. It is the image of the real and imaginative world. (Downing & Locke, 1992, p. 110). Ideational metafunction consists of the process, the participant noun, and the circumstance. It is called "transitivity." The mechanism (center of a clause) defines the action or circumstance in which the participants in a clause relate. There are six types of the process: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential. The following is a list of such process forms (Thompson, 2014):

1. The material process is concerned with physical activity and makes use of transitive verbs such as driving, sweeping, studying, writing, etc.
2. The mental process is the verbs that serve the mental image of our imaginary worlds, like: smile, see, imagine, etc.
3. The relational process refers to the process at the beginning of the clause relating to an object, followed by attributives. This process indicates the object's relation to the attributes that followed.
4. The verbal process designates verbs which say, ask, tell, proclaim, etc.
5. The behavioral cycle refers to the process in which the verbs are the intermediary between mind and substance, such as listening, laughing, crying, etc.
6. The existential process is indicated as the pseudo participant in a clause, using the 'there' method.

An analysis can be done using the ideational metafunction in a literary text. It functions to determine the types of actions that the characters (participants) play in a story. Different characters in process types may lead to varying types of action in the process analysis. Similarly, different genres can lead the writers to use different verbs too. Definition, for example, prefers to use "have" or "have," defined as a relational operation. At the same time, a recount is likely to use action verbs that are part of a material or mental method. The study can concentrate on setting a story in terms of circumstances, where, when, and how it took place.

2.2 Interpersonal Metafunction

Interpersonal metafunction refers to a social relationship that allows users of the language to interact, exhibit power, and build solidarity (Thompson 2014). The interpersonal tools relating to the establishment of relations can be in exposure through the study of speech function. Halliday (1994, p. 69) categorized speech function into four types: statement, offer, question, and command that realized by mood to perform two roles, namely: give and demand. The following figure demonstrates the types of speech roles and their realization in the mood.

	Commodity	
Role	Information	Goods & Services
Giving	Statement	Offer
Demanding	Question	Command

Mood	
Declarative	0
Interrogative	Imperative

Figure1. Speech function & mood

The speech feature in Figure 1 shows that the speaker uses declarative mood to give information to others while seeking information from others. The questioning type is in use. It is also possible to encode the provision of goods or services to other participants using declarative, interrogative, or imperative clauses. An imperative clause codes the demanding goods or services from others. Analysis of the speech's role in literary text focuses on the use of language through social interaction between characters on the plot. Does an author build a character as a resourceful person to offer information to others, or as a boss who has the power to give his workers an order, or as a helpful guy who is willing to provide other people products or services?

Another resource of interpersonal metafunction relevant for the analysis of a literary text is modality. From the SFL perspective, modality is a system of linguistic choices that allows the expression of the intentions of the speaker as well as

the belief of the speaker as to whether the proposition expressed is true, obligatory, desirable, or real. According to Thompson (2014), if the exchanged commodity is knowledge, the utterances are classified as a proposition. Modality relates to how certain information is in the presentation of this matter. This type of modality is broken down into probability and habituality. Probability refers to the probability of the information being true, whereas usuality refers to the frequency of the information is true.

Conversely, if the exchanged commodity is goods or services, the utterance is termed a proposal. Modality, in this case, is divided into duty and inclination. An obligation is about the action or command taking place. It includes permissible, advisable, and mandatory elements. Inclination refers to the degree of the speaker's willingness or inclination to deliver on the offer. In this case, the speaker sends out my signal: ability, willingness, and determination (Thompson, 2014). The following figure shows the function of speech and its modal realizations.

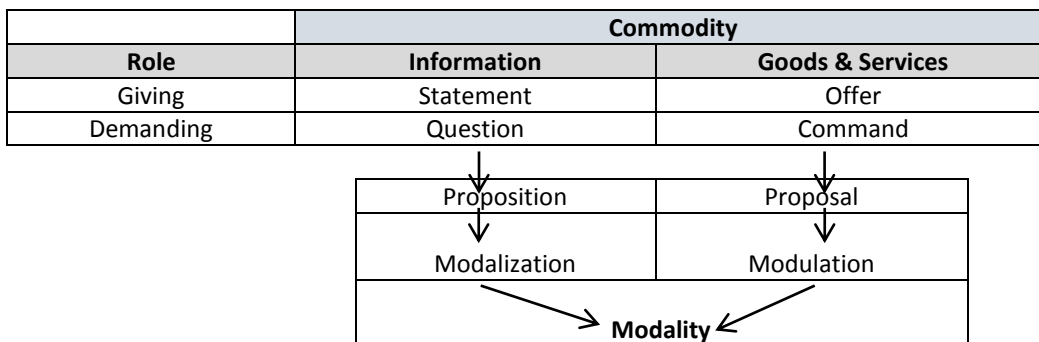


Figure2. Modality as the realization of the speech function

Figure 2 shows how modality turns the speech function. Giving information (in a statement) and requesting information (in question) will lead to a proposal and will be classified as modalization. On the other hand, the offering and demanding for goods and services will result in a proposal and will be categorized as the modulation. The table below shows the modalization and modulation degree values.

Table1: The degree value of modality

Degree	Modalization			Modulation		
	Probability	Be	Usuality	Obligation	Do	Inclination
High	Certain	Must be	always	required	Must do	determined
Medium	probably	Will be	usually	supposed	Will do	able
Low	possibly	May be	sometimes	allowed	May do	willing

The modality degree value, Table 1, shows the degree of modalization in probability and usuality, and the degree of modulation in obligation and inclination with the modal verbs used.

The literary modality analysis can be in the concentration on the assurance of the proposition and the frequency of the acts in a story. The analysis may also illuminate the actions or characters that are involved in a story. What kind of person it describes in the story? Modulation can highlight the types of statements that speakers use in conversation, whether they take the obligation or the inclination into account. For example, an employer's compulsory order may reveal the character as a determined boss, or who has control or the social status level in literary work.

Appraisal analysis, another method of interpersonal metafunction, is a semantic framework developed by White (1998) for emotional reaction (affect), aesthetic appraisal (appreciation), and a tool for engaging and amplifying these assessments (judgment). It is a sentimental linguistic theory: emotion, ethics, and aesthetics. It may provide more insights into the positions of speakers, how the language speakers can convey themselves. This linguistic framework, in terms of literary study, can be counted on investigating how writers convey their emotions through the characters they construct in stories.

2.4 Textual Metafunction

Textual metafunction refers to organizing interactions within a text. The textual metafunction functions to examine aspects of language. They can only be fully comprehensible through their contexts (Thompson, 2014). Besides, he states that textual

meanings can be built in three ways: repetition, conjunction, and thematization. Collerson (1994) suggested the cohesion analysis in a text to show the significant repeated references to a single theme. The achievement of this type of analysis is possible by constructing lexical chains, such as repetition of a word or phrase, use of pronouns, use of synonyms, hyponyms, and meronyms, and collocation in the document.

Themetization is considered necessary in literary analysis as one of the resources of a textual metafunction. It includes theme as the departure point of the message, and Rheme as the new information about the theme in every single clause (Halliday and Matthiessen, (2014), which comes immediately after the theme. In other words, theme is the first element that occurs in a clause, whereas Rheme is the recall clause. Gerot and Wignell (1994) divided Theme-Rheme into three categories: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Typically, but not always, the first nominal category in the clause is the ideational or topical unit. It can be a complex of nominal groups, an adverbial group, and pre-positional sentences or embedded clauses. A nominal group as the topic is classified as a topical topic unmarked. If the nominal group is not in the position as the subject of the clause, the topic will be considered a topical theme marked. "Mark" is a word that is used because it sounds stunning. It's not what we normally expect to find because it's catching attention. The interpersonal theme is a type of theme if first in clause construction modal adjuncts, vocatives, finites, or WH-questions occur. Eventually, if the conjunctions or adjuncts in clause construction come first, they are categorized as the Textual Theme.

The theme-rheme analysis of literary analysis will concentrate on the trends of the literary texts in the Theme-Rheme. Finding the types of themes dominating a text will lead to the discovery of how the author organized a story. Does the author tend to use the normal (unmarked-theme) or "unusual" (marked-theme) theme dominantly? In addition, the study of theme-rheme is effectively used to examine the translation of literary texts, such as short stories, novels, whether the original literary texts have the same number or pattern of Theme-Rheme with their translated ones. This point can indicate whether the translated literary texts are good or bad.

3. Methodology

The study was qualitative content analysis. The data consists of 20 scientific articles using Systemic Functional Linguistics as the theoretical base of the literary text analysis. The analysis was focused on the topics and objectives of the articles analysis. The categorization of the analysis was to expose how SFL was used to find out the answers to the social phenomenon in literary work.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on the explanations, the following is the results of the uses of SFL on 20 literary text analysis. The contributions are divided into three main areas: ideational or experiential metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, and textual metafunction. Table 2 shows the main characteristics of literary text analysis using SFL.

Table 2: The scheme of SFL on literary text analysis

	Metafunction	Sub-metafunction	Literary Text Analysis
SFL/SFG	Ideational/ experiential Metafunction	Transitivity analysis: Process, participants, & circumstance	1. The types of actions, and the characters in a story 2. Types of genre 3. Story setting (where and how the story takes place.)
	Interpersonal Metafunction	Speech Function	1. Types of characters in the story, an informative or a determined one. 2. Social status of characters, a powerful person or an ordinary one
		Modality	1. The certainty of the proposition and the frequency of the actions in a story 2. Clarify the kinds of actions or characters involved in a story 3. The types of statements of the speakers use in conversation whether they are obligation or inclination

	Textual Metafunction	Appraisal Analysis	1. The way an author expresses his/her emotion through the characters he/she creates in stories 2. The degree of emotion, the relationship among the characters
		Cohesion	1. Whether the organization of a story is cohesive by the author, the degree of cohesiveness of a text will influence the degree of coherence of the text.
		Theme-Rheme	1. Types of theme, and the dominant type of theme will show how the author organizes the story. 2. If the translated literary texts have the same theme patterns as the original ones

Table 2 shows a literary text analysis using SFL. Analysis of transitivity on a literary text may reveal the types of actions and characters performed in a story. It also explains the genre types and the setting of a story. Interpersonal metafunction can be carried out in the analysis of speech function, modality, and assessment. Analysis of the voice feature functions to figure out types of characters in stories, the social status of characters, be they extraordinary or ordinary. Analysis of modality can identify the certainty of the proposition and the frequency of the actions in a story, clarify the types of actions or characters involved in a story, and examine the kinds of statements used by the speakers in conversation whether they belong to the obligation or inclination. Appraisal analysis can be used to analyze how an author communicates his / her emotion through the characters he/she creates in a novel. It is applicable in finding the degree of emotion and the relationship between the characters.

The textual metafunction analysis of cohesion can function to examine the cohesiveness of a text. Moreover, Theme-rheme can be used to explore the types of theme patterns developed by the author in a story. In translation studies, Theme-rheme is used to find out the equality of theme patterns between the original literary texts and their translations.

5. Conclusion

The study aimed at exploring the contributions of Systemic Functional Linguistics in the literary text analysis. The contributions of SFL can be obtained after analyzing 20 articles of literary texts. The analysis was focused on the metafunction of literary language: ideational metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, and textual metafunction. The study has positively confirmed that the SFL, as a tool of analysis, can function to reveal the types of transitivity, speech function, modality, cohesion, and theme-rheme of a text. In other words, the types of characters, genre, thematic structure, coherence and the settings of a story can be uncovered by using SFL. Therefore, SFL application in the literary text analysis has brought a new perspective in discourse analysis. However, the SFL literary text analysis may cover a broad range of literary aspects, such as the purpose and sentiment of the writers, character descriptions, and social interaction among the characters in a story, text organization, and many more. Therefore, wide range of aspects and more data of literary text analysis using SFL still needs to be explored to show further contributions of SFL in literary text analysis.

References

- [1] Collerson, J. (1994). *English grammar: A functional approach*. Newtown, Australia: Primary English Teacher Association.
- [2] Cunanan, B.T. (2011). Using transitivity as a framework on stylistic analysis of Virginia Woolf's 'Old Mrs. Grey'. *Asian EFL Journal Professional Teaching Articles*, 54, 69-79.
- [3] Eggins, S. (2000). *An Introduction to Systemic-Functional Linguistics*. London: Continuum.
- [4] Downing, A., and Locke, P. (1992). *A university course in English grammar*. New York: Prentice-Hall.
- [5] Gallardo, B.C. (2006). Analysis of a literary work using systemic-functional grammar. *Proceedings from the 33rd International Systemic Functional Congress*. Sao Paulo, Brazil.
- [6] Gerot, L. & Wignell, P. (1995). *Making Sense of Functional Grammar*, Australia: Gerd Stabler.
- [7] Guo, N. (2008). Systemic Functional Grammar and its pedagogical implications. *Sino-US English Teaching*, (5) (10), 45-50.
- [8] Halliday, M.A.K. (1961). *Categories of the theory of grammar*. *Word*, 17 (3), 241-292.
- [9] Halliday, M.A.K. (1985). *Introduction to functional grammar*. New York: Routledge.
- [10] Halliday, M.A.K. (1990). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.

- [11] Halliday, M.A.K. (1994). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold
- [12] Halliday, M.A.K. and Matthiessen, C.M.I.M. (2014). *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*, New York: Routledge
- [13] Lukin, A. (2008). Reading literary texts: Beyond personal resources. In Z. Fang & M.J. Schleppegrell (Eds.), *Reading in secondary content areas: A language-based pedagogy* (pp. 85-103). Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.
- [14] Martin, J.R, Matthiessen, C. M. I. M., and Painter, C. (2010). *Deploying functional grammar*. Beijing: Commercial Press.
- [15] Slater, T. and McCrocklin, S. (2006). Learning to use Systemic Functional Linguistics to teach literary analysis: Views on the effectiveness of a short professional development workshop. In L. de Oliveira & M. Schiffner (Eds.), *Teaching English Language Arts to English Language Learners: Preparing pre-service and in-service teachers* (pp. 193-214). London, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [16] Thompson, G. (2004). *Introducing functional grammar* (2nd ed.). London, England: Hodder Education
- [17] Thomson, G. (2014). *Introducing functional grammar* (3rd ed.), New York: Routledge.
- [18] White, P.P.R. (1998). *Telling Media Tales: The News Story as Rhetoric*. Unpublished Ph.D. article, University of Sydney, Sydney.