

The Experiential Meaning in Forensic Courtroom Discourse

T. Silvana Sinar¹, T. Thyrhaya Zein¹, Nurlela¹ and Muhammad Yusuf¹

¹English Literature Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

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Abstract: As a part of forensic linguistics, courtroom discourse is crucial to be explored. This paper is an attempt to investigate the experiential meaning focused on process types in courtroom discourse based on Halliday's systemic functional grammar. Descriptive qualitative method focused on content analysis was employed as the research design. The data were the clauses taken from the conversation between jury, witness, and public prosecutor in a courtroom discourse in Medan-Indonesia. The findings reveal that material process is the dominant among other processes totalling to 33.07% followed successively by verbal (20.47%), mental and relational process (16.54%). It means that the interaction in courtroom discourse explores more about what happened in the case and what has performed by the actor or defendant. The speaker employs material process 'to deliver', action of corruption done implicitly, while verbal process is used to cover his worries of being known as corruptor.

1 INTRODUCTION

Language of law is able to be utilized as evidence in forensic linguistics (FL). Fuzer and Barros (2009) assert that a challenge is exactly presented by legal language through its complexity and technicality to the people who are concern on the legal practitioner education. Rodrigues (2005) argues that rules cover many areas in social life. Furthermore, the law language is regarded as having specific characteristics (Strębska-Liszewska 2017). The utilization of language in courtroom discourse is one of the main areas of FL (Coulthard & Johnson 2007; Olsson 2004; Wang 2012).

Fundamentally, systemic functional linguistics (henceforth SFL) is beneficial to analyze and explain how meanings are made in everyday linguistic interactions. Almost any area of linguistics can be relevant in court (Tiersma & Solan 2002) and language use was taken place in legal process (Sadiq 2011). Then, SFL also views that language possesses three simultaneous meanings regarded as metafunctions (Sinar 2007). Metafunctions are divided into the ideational; to represent the experiences, the textual; to link or organize the experiences, and the interpersonal; to exchange the experiences. Moreover, the ideational is divided into two categories, they are experiential function and logical function; those which realize the function of

clause as representation and communication. That is why the ideational meaning is regarded the representation of clause and its realization is through transitivity system covering process type. This can be used in analyzing courtroom discourse as the following examples.

Table 1: Jury's statement.

<i>Kalau proyek lanjutan peningkatan ruas jalan pasar 8 kecamatan Air Putih</i>	<i>sudah tau ?</i>
About the continuity of the improvement of road at pasar 8 district Air Putih	Have (you) known?
Phenomenon	Process; mental

Table 2: Witness' statement.

<i>si abun</i>	<i>Sebenarnya</i>	<i>menitipkan</i>	<i>230 juta</i>
Abun	trully	deposited	230 M
Actor		Process; material	Goal

Those utterances are taken from jury and witness' statement in courtroom discourse. Then, the representation of mental process 'sudah tau' or have

known in Jury’s statement is used to explore the involvement and the knowledge of the witness about the case. Then, material process is used by witness through the word ‘*menitipkan*’ or *deposit* to express that he did something. The system of transitivity has a purpose to explain how an action is done through various kinds of processes.

There are many studies conducted in the area of forensic linguistic and courtroom discourse. Stroud (2012) sees activity in courtroom discourse specifically on the participants’ changing role, Susanto (2016) in his study provides the examples of some language aspects applied in the courtroom, and then, Matin and Rahimi (2014) highlight the use of forensic discourse analysis to interpret and analyze legal context. Those previous research has some differences from this paper. Therefore, this paper is intended to investigate experiential meanings in courtroom discourse. To do this, the theory of transitivity analysis described by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) was employed.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Forensic Linguistics (FL) and Courtroom Discourse

Jordan (2002) states that FL is defined as one of applied linguistics branches or forensic sciences. It is also supported by Pádua (2012) claiming that FL deals with the concern on the use of language inside legal contexts and the legal phenomena. Another expert also argues that the research in the area of discourse in courtroom may cover many aspects such as testimony, opening and closing statements, etc (Dong 2013).

2.2 Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

This theory has a close relation to the texts and context (Sinar 2018) and it is utilized for construing human experiences and looking into the working of language within social context (Naz, Alvi & Baseer 2012). Another expert also argues that it also provides a study the interrelationship between language, text and the contexts (Lirola 2012). Three different levels of meaning are covered in metafunctions namely ideational function, interpersonal function, and textual function.

2.3 Transitivity System

Transitivity system elucidates the process as the realization of experience (Halliday 1994). Then, it is also related to the process type choice and the participants’ role realized into reality experiences (Eggs 2004). Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) divide process types as illustrated in table 3.

Table 3: Types of process in transitivity system.

No	Types of Process	Meaning	Participants	
			I	II
1.	Material: - Action - Event	“doing” “doing” “happening”	Actor	Goal
2.	Mental - Perception - Affection - Cognition	“sensing” “seeing” “feeling” “thinking”	Sensor	Phenomenon
3.	Relational - Attribution - Identification - Possession	“being” “attributing” ” “identifying” ” “having”	Token Carrier Identified Possessor	Value Attribute Identifier Possessed
4.	Behavioural	“behaving”	Behavior	-
5.	Verbal	“saying”	Sayer	Target
6.	Existential	“Existing”	Existent	-

3 METHOD

This study applied descriptive qualitative method focused on FL analysis on courtroom discourse. The analysis was based on SFL including metafunctions constructed ideationally through the transitivity choices of the process types of jury, witness, and public prosecutor in a trial stage in Medan. To carry out the research, some transcribed text of interaction among jury, witness, and public prosecutor in a trial stage was selected as the source of data. There are 127 clauses were analyzed. Firstly, each clause was analyzed, then the process was categorized, next the transitivity was analyzed based on type of process. After that, the types of processes were ranked based on the result of the analysis. Finally, the conclusion was drawn based on the analysis.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

It is discovered that five kinds of process appeared in the courtroom discourse containing the interaction between jury, witness, and public prosecutor. The detail of the distribution is illustrated in table 4.

Table 4: Process distribution.

No.	Process	Occurrences	%
1	Material	42	33.07
2	Mental	21	16.54
3	Relational	21	16.54
4	Behavioural	0	0.00
5	Verbal	26	20.47
6	Existential	17	13.39
Total		127	100

The table elucidates that the material process is the dominant one among the processes whereas the verbal, material, relational, and existential, respectively follow the material process; although, as far as frequency is concerned. In contrast, behavioural process did not occur in the data.

4.2 Discussion

The interaction in the courtroom discourse reveals that material process is most frequently used among other processes and the interaction describes that material process dominantly occurs and it is followed by three other processes, mental, relational, verbal and existential. This analysis implies that corruption act is closely related to the actor (who), place (where), and the goal (what), as represented in the following.

Clause 10

Jury: *Kemudian CV Jodi dipergunakan oleh Sucipta Abun dalam proyek peningkatan ruas jalan komplek 126 KOMPI C Tanjung Kaso Kecamatan Sei Suka* (Then, CV Jodi was used by Sucipta Abun in a project of road improvement of area 126 block c Tanjung Kaso districts Sei Suka).

Clause 11

Witness: *iya* (yes)

Table 6: Witness' response.

<i>iya</i>
yes
-

The clauses 10 and 11 illustrated the interaction of the jury and the witness. It contains material process

'*dipergunakan*' or 'used'. The jury emphasised by delivering material process that the actor performed or did something about the project case and the actor is involved. The witness then replied with a minor clause 'yes' to confirm the statement. This is also relevant to research conducted by Bartley (2017) proving that material (action) process is dominantly utilized in the courtroom discourse.

Table 5: Clause containing material process.

<i>kemudian</i>	<i>cv jodi</i>	<i>dipergunakan</i>	<i>oleh Sucipta Abun</i>	<i>dalam proyek peningkatan ruas jalan komplek 126 kOMPI c Tanjung Kaso kecamatan Sei Suka..</i>
Then	CV Jodi	was used	by Sucipta Abun	a project of road improvement of area 126 block c Tanjung Kaso districts Sei Suka
	Goal	Process: Material	Actor	Circ; place

Clause 29

Jury: *Ini saudara menyebutkan uang tersebut jumlahnya 240 juta, ya* (You mentioned that the money is totalling to 240 millions, right).

Table 7: Clauses containing verbal process.

<i>ini</i>	<i>saudara</i>	<i>menyebutkan</i>	<i>uang tersebut jumlahnya 240 juta, ya?</i>
this	You	mentioned	mentioned that the money is totalling to 240 millions, right?
	Sayer	Process: verbal	Verbiage

Table 8: Clauses containing relational process.

<i>harusnya,</i>	<i>tapi</i>	<i>240 juta,</i>	<i>iya</i>	<i>tapi</i>
(it) should be	but	240 M	yes	but
Process; relational	-	Value	-	-

Clause 30

Witness: *harusnya, tapi 240 juta, iya tapi...*(It should be, but,... 240 M, yes, but.....)

Clauses 29 and 30 show the interaction between the jury and witness. The clause explained in the table 7 shows the use of verbal process. This process respectively followed material process as the frequently used process. Verbal process is used to signal the process of saying. The jury used verbal process to clarify witness' statement about the amount of the money totalling to 240 millions. Then, the jury tried to explore the details and the witness' honesty and remind the witness based on what has been stated in police investigation report. This makes sense since Waskita (2014) argues that FL entails gaining truth and honesty, and who was speaking and its purpose can be guessed. In the trial stage, the jury and the witness were involved in the interaction. They also used relational process (clause 30) to signal the process of 'being' and to identify token and value. Then, mental process (clause 14 and 15) was also represented in the utterances. The mental process explains what actually occurs in the internal world of the mind (Suhadi 2012).

Clause 14

Jury: *tau saudara, yang dipakai abun yang ini?* (Do you know it is used by Abun?)

Table 9: Mental process used by jury.

<i>tau</i>	<i>saudara</i>	<i>yang dipakai yang ini</i>	<i>abun</i>
Do (.....) know	(you)	it is used	By Abun
Process: mental	vocative	Phenomenon	senser

The jury tried to explore the memory of the witness by expressing the word 'know'. This then was replied by the witness through the expression '*saya tau cuma 2*' (I know only 2). This means that the witness actually acknowledges about the information stated by the jury.

Clause 15

Witness: *saya tau cuma 2* (I know only 2)

Table 10: Mental process used by witness.

<i>Saya</i>	<i>tau</i>	<i>cuma 2</i>
I	know	only 2
Senser	Process: mental	Phenomenon

In courtroom discourse specifically corruption case, it can be interpreted that even though there are some codes or symbols, the indication of the existence of money transaction is realized by actor

and goal, the place is realized by circumstance, and the use of process is utilized in order to deceive the meaning. Then, text and context should be harmonious since the function of language is to convey meaning. Language is regarded as semiotic system which has form, meaning, and realization as asserted by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014).

5 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The experiential meaning analysis through transitivity presents that material process becomes frequently used that characterizes the courtroom discourse totalling to 33.07% followed successively by verbal (20.47%), mental and relational process (16.54%). It means that the interaction between jury, witness, and public prosecutor discussed more about what happened in the case and what has performed by the actor or defendant and the speaker employs material process 'to deliver', action of corruption done implicitly, while verbal process is used to accomplish his worries of being known as corruptor. It is also suggested for further research to explore the courtroom discourse based on other sub-field of linguistic such as syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

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