



Interpersonal Realizations in the 'Panjat Pinang' Comic of English for Nusantara Grade 8

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026 - 06- 01 Revised: 2026 06-18 Accepted: 2026 06-24 Keywords: Systemic Functional Linguistics; Interpersonal meaning; Modality; English for Foreign Language; English for Nusantara. DOI: 10.24256/ideasv14i1.10228 Corresponding Author: Nabila Alqoyyumi 22106310560102@stude nt.unsika.ac.id Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang, Karawang	<i>This study investigates the realization of interpersonal meaning through mood types and modality in the “Panjat Pinang” comic from the English for Nusantara Grade 8 textbook. It addresses the limited focus on textbook-based SFL analysis and the lack of attention to interpersonal metafunction in educational comics within the Indonesian EFL context. Grounded in Halliday and Matthiessen’s interpersonal metafunction theory, this descriptive qualitative study analyzes verbal dialogues in the comic, using the clause as the unit of analysis to identify mood types—declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamative—as well as modality expressions. The findings reveal that declarative clauses dominate the discourse, functioning not only to convey information but also to construct cultural narratives and identity. Interrogative clauses facilitate interaction and engagement, while imperative and exclamative forms contribute to politeness and emotional expression. Although modality appears in limited instances, it plays a significant role in expressing interpersonal stance, particularly in representing values such as humility, certainty, and politeness. In addition, the study highlights that interpersonal meaning is constructed through the interaction of verbal and visual elements, reinforcing the multimodal nature of the comic. These findings demonstrate that the “Panjat Pinang” comic functions as a multimodal pedagogical resource that models authentic interpersonal communication. This study contributes to SFL research by providing empirical evidence of interpersonal meaning in a textbook-based comic, and to EFL material development by showing how culturally embedded comics can support learners’ communicative and pragmatic competence.</i>

1. Introduction

Language is a uniquely human faculty that transcends its basic function as a communication tool; it is deeply intertwined with culture, identity, and social interaction. Learning a language involves more than acquiring vocabulary and

mastering grammatical rules; it requires the ability to use language in context to construct meaning and participate in social relationships.

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where exposure to authentic language use may be limited, developing learners' awareness of how language constructs social meaning is essential. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), offers a powerful lens to understand language as a social semiotic system. Within this framework, the interpersonal metafunction explains how language is used to establish, negotiate, and maintain relationships through grammatical resources such as mood and modality.

The relevance of SFL in language education has contributed to a shift from form-focused instruction to the development of functional and pragmatic competence. Previous studies have explored interpersonal meaning across various contexts. In Indonesia, Ramanda et al. (2022) demonstrated how comics and webtoons reveal interpersonal meanings through visual-verbal synergy. Similarly, Syairofi (2026) highlighted the effectiveness of the SFL genre-based approach in improving students' reading comprehension, while emphasizing the need for more localized studies focusing on culturally specific and multimodal teaching materials.

In a broader international context, Arigusman (2018) analyzed students' narrative texts using an SFL approach and found that interpersonal meaning is largely realized through mood structures, particularly declarative forms, which position the writer as an information provider. In addition, Ramanda et al. (2020) examined graphic novels using a multimodal SFL framework and showed that meaning in comics is constructed through the integration of textual and visual elements, with identifiable interpersonal patterns emerging across both modes.

Despite these contributions, there remains a clear gap in the literature. Specifically, there is a lack of SFL-based analysis on textbook materials and limited attention to the interpersonal metafunction in educational comics. While traditional textbooks tend to emphasize grammatical accuracy through repetitive exercises, they often overlook the pragmatic and interpersonal dimensions of language use.

This gap is particularly significant in the Indonesian context, where the English for Nusantara textbook serves as a primary learning resource in the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. Although widely used, existing studies have not sufficiently examined how its embedded comics—such as the “Panjat Pinang” comic—function as models of interpersonal communication through specific mood and modality choices.

Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research question: *How is interpersonal meaning realized through mood types and modality in the “Panjat Pinang” comic of English for Nusantara Grade 8?*

The objective of this study is to analyze the mood types and modality used in the comic's dialogues and to examine their pedagogical implications.

This study uniquely examines a culturally grounded comic within a state-

mandated textbook through an interpersonal metafunction analysis. It highlights how mood and modality function as linguistic resources for constructing both communication and cultural values.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to SFL research, particularly in the area of interpersonal metafunction, as well as to EFL material development by demonstrating how educational comics can serve as authentic models for effective communication and character development in a localized context.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design using a SFL approach, with a specific focus on the interpersonal metafunction. Following the naturalistic paradigm proposed by Creswell (2013), this research aims to understand language phenomena within their social context without relying on statistical analysis. The design is oriented toward content and discourse analysis, enabling an in-depth exploration of how language constructs meaning as a social semiotic system. By adopting SFL as the primary analytical framework (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), this study examines how grammatical structures enact social roles and interpersonal relationships within a pedagogical text.

The subject of this research is the “Panjat Pinang” comic, a multimodal educational text included in the English for Nusantara Grade 8 textbook, published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education. The selection of this comic was based on several criteria: (1) its representation of everyday social interactions, such as greetings, requests, and storytelling; (2) its richness in dialogic exchanges suitable for interpersonal analysis; and (3) its cultural relevance, as it reflects Indonesian social values and national identity. By focusing on a state-mandated textbook, this study ensures that the data are representative of current pedagogical practices under the Kurikulum Merdeka framework.

The data consist of all verbal dialogues between characters in the comic. The clause was established as the primary unit of analysis, as it represents the smallest functional unit for analyzing mood and modality within the SFL framework. Data were collected through a documentation method followed by manual transcription. All dialogues were carefully transcribed from the comic panels into a structured dataset. To ensure transcription accuracy, the data were cross-checked multiple times by re-reading the original text and comparing it with the transcribed version to minimize omission or misinterpretation. Each clause was then segmented based on its syntactic structure and speech function to enable systematic linguistic analysis.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, an expert validation strategy was employed. The categorized data, including mood types and modality classifications, were reviewed by a peer with knowledge of SFL to ensure consistency and accuracy in the coding process. This step was conducted to reduce

subjectivity and strengthen the reliability of the findings.

The data analysis followed three stages: data reduction, classification, and interpretation. In the first stage, the data were reduced by focusing only on clauses relevant to interpersonal meaning. In the second stage, each clause was classified according to its mood type—declarative, interrogative, imperative, or exclamative—based on the SFL mood system. Modality was then analyzed by identifying expressions of probability, obligation, and inclination. The degree of modality (high, medium, or low) was determined based on the type of modal expressions used, such as modal verbs and modal adjuncts. For example, modal verbs such as *must* were categorized as high modality, *should* as medium modality, and *can* as low modality, following the frameworks proposed by Eggins (2004) and Martin and Rose (2007).

In the final stage, the findings were interpreted qualitatively to explain how mood and modality function as resources for constructing interpersonal meaning. Each clause was analyzed within its contextual use to understand how characters negotiate relationships, express attitudes, and convey social roles. The results are presented in a narrative form, supported by descriptive tables to illustrate the distribution and patterns of the identified linguistic features.

Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its focus on a single comic text, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. However, the in-depth analysis provides valuable insights into how interpersonal meaning is constructed within a specific educational and cultural context.

3. Result

The analysis of the “Panjat Pinang” comic from the English for Nusantara Grade 8 textbook reveals a systematic use of interpersonal resources as conceptualized within the SFL framework. The findings are categorized into mood types, speech functions, and modality realizations identified across the dialogues.

It is important to note that the total number of mood types (43 clauses) differs slightly from the total number of speech functions (45 instances), as some clauses perform overlapping interpersonal roles depending on their contextual use.

Mood Types and Speech Functions

The distribution of mood types and their corresponding speech functions demonstrates how characters interact and exchange meaning within the narrative. The quantitative data of these occurrences are presented in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Table 1. Distribution of Mood Types

Mood types	Frequency	Percentage
Declarative	26	60.5%
Interrogative	13	30.2%
Imperative	1	2.3%

Exclamative	3	7.0%
Total	43	100%

Table 2. Distribution of Speech Functions

Speech functions	Frequency
Statement	22
Question	14
Greeting	2
Congratulation	2
Command/Request	1
Exclamation	2
Others (e.g., empathy, reassurance)	4
Total	45

The findings show that declarative clauses are the most dominant mood type (60.5%). This dominance reflects the primary communicative purpose of the comic, which is to provide information and construct narratives about shared experiences, particularly those related to Independence Day celebrations. In line with SFL theory, declarative clauses typically function as statements, positioning the speaker as a provider of information. This pattern is also consistent with textbook discourse norms, where informational clarity and structured knowledge delivery are prioritized. The dominance of declaratives indicates that the comic serves not only as an interactive dialogue but also as a pedagogical tool for conveying cultural and historical knowledge.

Interrogative clauses (30.2%) function to sustain interaction and encourage engagement between characters. These clauses facilitate the flow of conversation by prompting responses, reflecting a dialogic learning model commonly promoted in EFL materials.

In contrast, imperative (2.3%) and exclamative clauses (7.0%) occur less frequently. This limited use suggests that the text avoids authoritative or emotionally exaggerated expressions, instead emphasizing balanced and polite interaction. This aligns with the educational goal of modeling respectful communication in classroom contexts.

Modality Realizations

Modality in the comic is used selectively to express the speaker's attitude toward the proposition. The distribution of modality types and their degrees is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Realization of Modality Types and Degrees

Category	Feature	Count
Type	Probability	3

Degree	Obligation	2
	Inclination	1
	High	3
	Low	2
	Medium	1

As shown in Table 3, although modality is not frequently used, its presence is functionally significant. High-degree modality, such as “really” and “never”, is employed to emphasize certainty and evaluation. For instance, the use of “really” strengthens the speaker’s assessment of difficulty, while “never” reinforces commitment and perseverance. These expressions align with the representation of cultural values, particularly resilience and determination.

On the other hand, low-degree modality, such as “just” and “please”, is used to soften expressions and maintain politeness. This reflects interpersonal sensitivity, where speakers mitigate their statements to avoid imposing on others.

Compared to typical SFL patterns, where modality may vary widely depending on genre, the limited yet strategic use of modality in this comic suggests a deliberate pedagogical choice. The text prioritizes clarity and accessibility while still introducing learners to subtle interpersonal meanings.

Clause Analysis Sample

To provide a clear qualitative understanding of how these features function in context, Table 4 illustrates representative samples of the analyzed clauses.

Table 4. Sample Analysis of Interpersonal Meaning

Speaker	Clause	Mood Type	Modality	Interpersonal Meaning
Father	“That sounds fun!”	Exclamative	-	Expressing enthusiasm
Galang	“Please tell me more...”	Imperative	Low Obligation	Polite request
Galang	“It’s really hard, isn’t it?”	Declarative+Tag	High probability	Seeking confirmation
Galang	“I just kept my pace.”	Declarative	Low inclination	Showing modesty

As shown in the analysis, mood and modality operate together to construct interpersonal meaning. The clause “It’s really hard, isn’t it?” combines a declarative structure with a tag question, allowing the speaker to both provide information and seek agreement. The modal adjunct “really” intensifies the evaluation, signaling high certainty.

Similarly, the use of “please” in “Please tell me more...” reduces the force of the imperative, transforming it into a polite request. This reflects how modality interacts with mood to negotiate social relationships.

Overall, these findings indicate that the comic functions as a pedagogical model of interpersonal communication, demonstrating how linguistic choices can express attitudes, maintain politeness, and reflect cultural values. Through the integration of mood and modality, the text provides learners with practical examples of how meaning is constructed in socially appropriate ways.

4. Discussion



Figure 1. Visual-verbal interaction in the "Panjat Pinang" comic strip 1.1

The findings suggest that the Panjat Pinang comic functions not merely as a linguistic exercise, but as a multimodal semiotic resource that models authentic interpersonal communication. Rather than focusing solely on grammatical accuracy, the text demonstrates how language constructs meaning within social and cultural contexts. This perspective is consistent with SFL, which conceptualizes language as a resource for meaning-making rather than a set of isolated rules (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Almurashi, 2016).

From the perspective of mood, the predominance of declarative clauses reflects the role of the text as a narrative and informational medium. However, beyond this conventional function, the comic illustrates how declaratives can be used to transmit cultural knowledge and shared experiences across generations. The interaction between the father and Galang shows how storytelling becomes a means of constructing identity and reinforcing national values. This pattern extends previous SFL research, such as Arigusman (2018), by demonstrating that declarative clauses in educational comics function not only to convey information but also to mediate cultural meaning within pedagogical texts.

In contrast, the use of interrogative clauses highlights the interactive nature of the discourse. Unlike the "display questions" commonly found in traditional textbooks, the questions in this comic sustain genuine interaction and enable participants to co-construct meaning. This pattern supports Eggin's (2004) argument that interrogatives play a central role in negotiating interpersonal relationships. It also aligns with Syairofi (2026), who emphasizes that interaction is essential for fostering learner engagement in SFL-based pedagogy. Consequently, the comic offers a more authentic model of conversational patterns compared to conventional EFL materials.

The analysis of modality further reveals how interpersonal relationships and cultural values are negotiated. High-degree modality is used to express strong evaluation and certainty, particularly in representing perseverance and determination. At the same time, low-degree modality functions as a politeness

strategy, reflecting interpersonal sensitivity and social harmony. This evidence supports Martin and Rose (2007), who argue that modality encodes speakers' attitudes and judgments, and extends the findings of Anshari et al. (2021), which highlight the role of interpersonal meaning in shaping relational dynamics in comics. In this context, modality operates not only as a linguistic feature but also as a strategic pedagogical device for embedding cultural norms such as humility and respect into language learning.

In addition to verbal elements, the visual dimension of the comic contributes significantly to interpersonal meaning. Facial expressions, gestures, and panel sequencing reinforce the emotional tone and relational dynamics between characters. These visual cues work together with verbal clauses to strengthen meaning-making, reflecting the SFL perspective that meaning is realized through multiple semiotic modes simultaneously. This finding is consistent with Ramanda et al. (2020) and Ramanda et al. (2022), who emphasize the importance of multimodal interaction in constructing meaning in graphic narratives. Furthermore, Arani (2025) highlights that the English for Nusantara textbook integrates multimodal elements to enhance students' comprehension and engagement.

From a pedagogical perspective, these results indicate that educational comics can serve as effective models for teaching not only linguistic forms but also interpersonal and cultural competence. By exposing learners to authentic patterns of interaction, such materials help bridge the gap between language knowledge and language use. This supports Handayani and Yunita (2025), who argue that English textbooks in Indonesia play a crucial role in representing cultural values within EFL learning.

This study contributes to SFL research by providing empirical evidence of how interpersonal meaning is realized in a culturally grounded, textbook-based comic through the integration of mood, modality, and multimodal elements. Additionally, it contributes to EFL material development by highlighting the potential of educational comics as resources for fostering communicative competence and character education in localized learning contexts. These findings reinforce the importance of integrating functional and multimodal perspectives in EFL materials to better prepare learners for authentic communication in real-world contexts.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the Panjat Pinang comic in the English for Nusantara Grade 8 textbook functions as a multimodal pedagogical resource that systematically models interpersonal meaning in EFL contexts. Through the SFL framework, the findings demonstrate that mood and modality are not merely grammatical features, but functional resources used to construct social relationships, express attitudes, and transmit cultural values.

The analysis shows that declarative clauses play a central role in structuring the discourse as a narrative medium for sharing experiences and cultural knowledge, while interrogative clauses support interactive meaning-making by sustaining engagement between participants. In addition, although modality appears in limited instances, it performs a significant role in encoding interpersonal stance, particularly in representing values such as perseverance, politeness, and humility. These findings highlight that interpersonal meaning in the comic is realized through the integration of linguistic choices and contextual functions, rather than through isolated grammatical forms.

Importantly, this study also emphasizes that meaning in the comic is constructed multimodally. Visual elements such as facial expressions and gestures complement verbal interactions by reinforcing emotional tone and relational dynamics. This indicates that interpersonal meaning in educational comics emerges from the interplay between verbal and visual semiotic resources.

This study offers two main contributions. First, it extends SFL research by providing empirical evidence of how interpersonal metafunction operates within a culturally grounded, textbook-based comic. Second, it contributes to EFL material development by demonstrating that educational comics can serve as effective resources for fostering communicative competence and cultural awareness in localized learning contexts.

However, this study is limited by its focus on a single comic text and its primary emphasis on verbal analysis, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research is recommended to examine other texts within the same textbook, explore additional metafunctions such as ideational and textual meanings, and apply a more comprehensive multimodal discourse analysis. For pedagogical practice, it is suggested that EFL teachers incorporate SFL-informed approaches in classroom activities to help students understand how language functions in real social interaction, particularly in expressing interpersonal meaning and cultural values.

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