



Constructing Ecological Experience in ELT Textbook: A Transitivity-based Study of Indonesian Senior High School Narratives

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-05-16 Revised: 2026-06-20 Accepted: 2026-06-22 Keywords: EFL Textbook; Ideational Metafunction; Narrative Text; Systemic Functional Linguistics; Transitivity DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.10636 Corresponding Author: Pranata Lulus Soeparno pranatalulus@students.unnes.ac.id English Language Education, Universitas Negeri Semarang	<i>Textbooks play a central role in EFL classrooms not only as media for learning grammar and vocabulary but also as mediators of social and cultural meanings. This study investigates how experiential meanings are constructed in Indonesian senior high school textbooks through the transitivity system of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as transitivity patterns reveal how agency, responsibility, and environmental actions are represented in textbook discourse. Four narrative texts from English for Change Grade XI (Unit 4: Indonesian Environmental Figures) were segmented into clauses and analyzed in terms of process types, participant roles, and circumstantial elements. A total of 115 clauses were identified. The findings reveal that material processes dominate the data (53 clauses or 46%), followed by relational processes (32 clauses or 28%), and mental processes (21 clauses or 18%). Verbal, behavioral, and existential processes occur marginally. These patterns indicate that environmental experience is primarily represented through observable actions and identity construction, with comparatively limited emphasis on dialogue and reflection. This tendency suggests that ecological issues are pedagogically framed as tangible and action-oriented, potentially facilitating comprehension but constraining opportunities for critical engagement. The study contributes to SFL-based textbook research by demonstrating how transitivity patterns shape environmental discourse in EFL materials and offers implications for more dialogic and reflective textbook design.</i>

1. Introduction

Textbooks remain central to EFL instruction because they provide learners repeated access to model texts, topics, and classroom routines. In the Indonesian context, Hanifa (2018) demonstrates that textbook analysis must take into account the way materials are structured and how language input and learning requirements are organized, as these factors can significantly impact the effectiveness of EFL instruction and student learning outcomes. Rinekso (2021) includes a similar point that even textbooks can indicate which competencies students should practice in literacy at school. Therefore, close attention should thus be given to reading sections. According to Ariawan et al. (2023), reading tasks in Indonesian English textbooks can put the learners at various levels of thinking, starting with recall and going through analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. This is especially critical for senior high school students because they are expected to learn the language while also gaining knowledge about social issues, such as environmental consciousness, which can enhance their critical thinking skills.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) would be appropriate in this regard since it considers language a tool of making sense. Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) discuss how experience is depicted within the ideational metafunction. Eggins (2004) describes this role by outlining my choices regarding processes, participants, and circumstances. Thompson (2013) proposes the analytical value that helps researchers see what actions are foregrounded, who is represented as acting or being affected, what qualities are attached to people or phenomena, and where or when those experiences are placed. Those grounded theories are treated as the grammatical entry point for representing the transitivity in the chosen textbook.

Previous studies have shown that textbook discourse reflects not only language use but also social, cultural, and ideological meanings. Through SFL and transitivity analysis, researchers have examined gender representation, interactional meaning, and cultural identity in EFL textbooks (Emilia et al., 2017; Ismael & Mohammadzadeh, 2023; Niman & Darong, 2024; Said, 2023; Xiang & Yenika-Agbaw, 2021). Recent studies further indicate that textbook research has expanded toward broader meaning-making and ideological concerns (Lavrenteva & Orland-Barak, 2023; Zhang et al., 2024). Transitivity analysis has also been applied to narrative writing, reading texts, and EFL textbooks, including studies on environmental and moral values in ELT materials (Agustina & Suarnajaya, 2021; Harahap et al., 2022; Setyono & Widodo, 2019). These findings highlight that textbooks can subtly influence students' perceptions of what is ordinary, valuable, or possible.

However, those studies tend to examine gender representation, general cultural values, student writing, or board textbook text types, whereas few have focused on high school narratives about environmental figures constructing ecological experience through the transitivity network of process, participants, and circumstances. This focus is significant, as ecological topics are not only introducing ecological discourse but also modeling who can act, what kinds of action are valued, and whether environmental responsibility is taken as an individual, communal, or systemic responsibility. This study thus fills that gap by examining how the selected narrative, presented in the Grade XI textbooks, represents ecological experience through the ideational metafunction.

While previous studies have examined gender representation, cultural values, and general discourse patterns in EFL textbooks, limited attention has been paid to how environmental narratives construct ecological experience through transitivity choices. In particular, there is a lack of research focusing on how Indonesian high school textbooks represent environmental figures as agents of action within the ideational metafunction. Addressing this gap is important because transitivity patterns not only describe experience but also implicitly model agency, responsibility, and values. This study therefore

investigates how narrative texts in a Grade XI textbook construe ecological experience through process types, participant roles, and circumstantial elements.

2. Method

The qualitative descriptive study design was employed to explore linguistic representation of experience in EFL narrative texts. The data consisted of four narrative texts from Bahasa Inggris: English for Change Grade XI, Unit 4: Indonesian Environmental Figures. This genre was chosen purposefully because it provides rich experiential representation through actions, participants, events, and settings, whereas other text types in the textbook mainly emphasize description, instruction, or interaction. The analytic scheme was the ideational metafunction with the transitivity system developed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) as the primary coding guide. The design was descriptive, as the objective was to explain patterns in the textbooks rather than to test statistical relationships and make generalizations. The examples of the coding procedure can be seen as follows.

Table 1. Examples of Transitivity Analysis

TEXT 2 CLAUSE 4

she	co-founded	The Jaga Rimba youth movement
Actor	Material Process	Goal

TEXT 1 CLAUSE 2

she	is	a young environmentalist
Carrier	Relational Process: Attributive	Attribute

To enhance methodological rigor, the coding procedure followed three stages: (1) clause segmentation based on experiential boundaries, (2) identification of process types using the verbal group as the primary indicator, and (3) classification of participants and circumstances following Halliday and Matthiessen (2013). A second researcher with expertise in SFL independently coded a subset of data (20% of clauses) to ensure reliability. Inter-coder agreement reached 91%, indicating a high level of consistency. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion, and the coding scheme was refined accordingly.

Data Collection & Analysis

The data was collected through repeated close reading. Each text was divided into clauses because the clause is the main unit for transitivity analysis. Following Thompson (2013), the verbal group was used as the first indicator for identifying the process in each clause. The clauses were then coded for process type, participant role, and circumstance category. The coding distinguished material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential processes. Frequency counts were used to map the overall pattern, while qualitative interpretation explained how the textbook builds action, identity, perception, and context. Martin and Rose's (2008) account of narrative genre was used only to support the interpretation of event sequencing.

To strengthen trustworthiness, the coding decisions were checked through peer review. A sample of clauses was reviewed by researchers familiar with SFL analysis. Disagreements were discussed until a stable coding decision was reached. The revision trail

was retained so that the movement from segmentation to interpretation could be inspected. Nowell et al. (2017) describe this kind of documentation as important for dependability in qualitative analysis. In this investigation, the procedure helped researchers keep the transitivity labels consistent across the four texts.

3. Result

Distribution of Clause Types

The four narrative texts from Bahasa Inggris: English for Change Grade XI were processed into 115 analyzable clauses. Simple clauses account for 79, while complex clauses account for 36. This distribution shows that the textbook heavily depends on accessible clause structures. A linguistic-complexity study by To (2018) notes that a textbook is shaped not only by vocabulary but also by clause organization. Exposing students to rich and varied clause development strategies is proven to foster stronger engagement in EFL reading activity (Widayanti et al., 2025). In the current data, the tendency towards simple clauses seems to help students stay in touch with environmental narratives without losing the storyline.

Table 2. Types of Clauses

Text	Simple Clause	Complex Clause	Total
Text 1	30	14	44
Text 2	12	6	18
Text 3	21	9	30
Text 4	16	7	23
Total	79	36	115

Distribution of Process Types

The analysis identified 115 processes across the four narrative texts, the most common types of which are material process with 53 occurrences, or 46.09% of all processes. Relational process is the second most frequent, with 32 occurrences or 27.83%, followed by mental process, with 21 occurrences or 18.26%. The verbal process appears seven times, while behavioral and existential process are mentioned once for each. This distribution implies that the textbook presents environmental experience primarily through actions and events, followed by clauses that define people, conditions, qualities, and perceptions.

Table 3. Number of Process Types

Process	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Total	%
Material	20	10	12	11	53	46%
Mental	9	2	7	3	21	18%
Relational	13	4	8	7	32	28%
Verbal	1	1	3	2	7	6%
Behavioral	1	0	0	0	1	1%
Existential	0	1	0	0	1	1%
Total	44	18	30	23	115	

The dominance of material process makes the narratives action-oriented. Most environmental figures are described through what they do, build, protect, plant, fight, or change. Suparto (2018) shows that material clauses can foreground agency and observable social activity in public discourse. Darong (2023) makes a similar point in textbook metafunction analysis, where process choice affects the experiential profile of the text. In the present textbook, material clauses make ecological concern concrete rather than abstract.

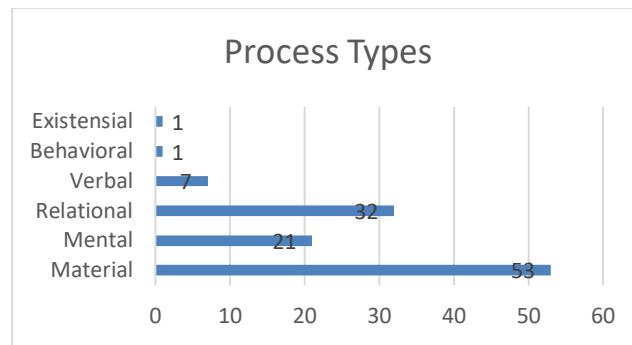


Figure 1. Frequency of Process Types

Distribution of Participant Roles

There were 207 participant roles identified across the four texts. Actor and goal are the most frequent roles, with 45 and 44 occurrences, respectively. This trend is in line with the dominance of material processes, which often emphasize actions and interactions that involve actors and goals in various contexts. Relational participant roles, particularly Carrier and Attribute, are prominent, whereas mental participant roles, such as Sensor and Phenomenon, are moderately represented. This indicates that the textbook focuses on actors' actions and interactions, as well as their relationships and attributes. These patterns indicate that the textbook provides considerable grammatical space to people or entities that act, receive action, possess qualities, or experience thoughts and feelings.

The high frequency of actor and goal roles is crucial, as participant selection plays a significant role in determining who receives agency in the clause. Emilia et al. (2017) show that participant roles can reveal how a textbook distributes visibility and social positioning. If not carefully considered, such a simple discourse can lead students to social inequality and biased perception (Ariyanto, 2018). In current research, the recurring actors' position as environmental figures is the main agent of change, since the goal is to make their action visible to students.

Table 4. Number of Participants

Participant	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Total	%
Actor	18	8	10	9	45	22%
Sensor	8	2	6	3	19	9%
Carrier	12	4	7	6	29	14%
Goal	16	9	11	8	44	21%
Phenomenon	7	2	5	3	17	8%
Attribute	13	4	8	7	32	15%
Sayer	1	1	3	2	7	3%
Others	5	2	4	3	14	7%
Total	80	32	54	41	207	

Distribution of Circumstances

Circumstantial elements provide contextual details regarding the process. Out of 76 circumstances, spatial location is the most frequent category with 26 occurrences or 34%, followed by temporal location with 18 occurrences or 24%, and manner with 14 occurrences or 18%. Cause and accompaniment appear six times each, matter appears four times, and other circumstances appear twice. These findings show that the narratives are strongly anchored in where, when, and how environmental action happens.

The frequent use of spatial and temporal circumstances provides the texts a localized experiential frame. Environmental issues are not presented as far-off global incidents. Instead, they are attached to particular places, times, and manners of action, illustrating how local contexts shape environmental issues and influence community responses to them. Puspitasari et al. (2021) demonstrate that Indonesian English textbooks can teach values through how verbal and visual texts picture everyday behavior. In this ecological discourse, the textbook relates environmental responsibility to the settings that Indonesian learners can more easily imagine, such as local parks, schools, and community spaces where they engage with nature and their surroundings.

Table 5. Number of Circumstances

Circumstance	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Total	%
Location (spatial)	10	5	6	5	26	34%
Location (temporal)	6	3	5	4	18	24%
Manner	5	2	4	3	14	18%
Cause	2	1	2	1	6	8%
Accompaniment	2	1	2	1	6	8%
Matter	1	1	1	1	4	5%
Others	1	0	1	0	2	3%
Total	27	13	21	15	76	

4. Discussion

Material Processes: Framing Ecological Stewardship as Action

The predominance of material processes shows that the four narratives construct ecological stewardship as practical action. In narrative genre theory, Martin and Rose (2008) describe events and actions are central for the flow of stories. The selected textbook uses this narrative movement for a clear pedagogical purpose. Environmental figures are embodied through doing: protecting, building, planting, organizing, and responding to environmental issues. The trend provides students a grammar of action, not only a list of environmental terms.

This finding can be compared with previous transitivity research on Indonesian educational texts. Agustina and Suarnajaya (2021) found that material processes were prominent in EFL students' narrative writing. By creating text with a high occurrence of material process, it helps students realize the importance of concrete actions being portrayed throughout the events (Mulyanti & Wati, 2022). The present study differs from those works because the data are senior high school narratives about national environmental figures. The comparison suggests that material processes are not accidental; they are a common grammatical route for building action-based narratives in EFL materials.

A textbook can help students understand environmental issues easily because it repeatedly represents them through heroic and visible action. To widen the vision, such environmental value needs to address collective action, multi-actor networks, and wider socio-technical change rather than focusing only on individual conservation behavior (Jorgenson et al., 2019). In a similar direction, Kaya and Elster (2019) elaborate further that environmental discourse should include knowledge of environmental issues, action strategies, values, and competencies as a basis for action. Therefore, while the action-oriented pattern proves pedagogically beneficial, it requires balancing with clauses that foster dialogue, reasoning, and evaluation.

Relational and Mental Processes: Building Identity and Empathy

The relational process accounts for 27.83% of the data, building the evaluative and identity-related layer of the narratives. Through attributive and identifying clauses, the textbook presents environmental figures as committed, capable, or socially meaningful. Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) explain that relational clauses construe being, having, and identifying. In this data, that function helps turn environmental actors into recognizable models rather than only characters in a story, allowing for a more profound understanding of their roles and significance within the narrative. The grammar thus supports both description and value construction.

Mental processes, which account for 18.26% of all processes, provide a more reflective dimension. They allow the narratives to exhibit perception, concern, awareness, or desire, although this part of the experiential profile remains less developed than action and description, indicating that while mental processes are present, they may not be fully utilized to enhance the depth of the narratives. Schleppegrell (2004) argues that school language must help learners go beyond surface content toward a more explicit focus on meaning-making. The modest number of mental clauses suggests that the textbook provides some access to inner experience but still prioritizes external action. This balance may support comprehension, but it provides limited space for reflective ecological reasoning.

The Role of Circumstances in Grounding Ecological Discourse

Circumstances play a major role in grounding the ecological discourse in this textbook. Spatial location, temporal location, and manner are the three most frequent circumstantial categories. These elements do not merely add background details. Thompson (2013) describes circumstances as resources that extend processes by specifying the setting or conditions in which experience unfolds. In the present texts, the circumstances make environmental action traceable in place, time, and mode of action. The outcome is a local rather than far-off representation of ecological responsibility.

This localization has a pedagogical function. When students only see large-scale environmental issues as global or abstract phenomena, they may struggle to process them. When textbook texts connect environmental action to specific local settings, they reduce this distance and provide a clearer route from reading comprehension to social relevance, thereby enhancing students' ability to engage with and act on environmental issues in their communities. According to Hanifa (2018), it is important to pinpoint the need to evaluate whether EFL materials fit students' instructional context. The selected narratives appear to fulfill that need by teaching English in an environmental action that can be visualized by students within their own national setting.

Textbooks as Socializing Agents: Pedagogical Implications

The findings also confirm the fact that textbooks are socializing texts. Their grammatical patterns call learners to value certain forms of action, identity, and responsibility. Setyono and Widodo (2019) showed that Indonesian EFL textbooks might reflect the multicultural principles in the form of selected discourse patterns, which can help learners understand diverse cultural perspectives and enhance their language skills. Rinekso (2021) also discovered that textbooks can indicate the expectations of twenty-first-century skills. Gulya and Fehérvári (2023) add a broader caution from disability representation: limited or narrow representation in EFL textbooks can shape how learners participate and see social groups.

The current study adds that transitivity choices can perform similar work for environmental themes. For classroom practice, teachers can ask students not only what a text says but also how agency, responsibility, and perspective are being distributed into the text's grammar. Regarding to pedagogy, Troyan et al. (2022) advocate this type of critical SFL-based pedagogy to be implemented in critical reading activity. Such work can make textbook reading more analytical without moving away from language learning.

5. Conclusion

This present study indicates that the selected narrative texts from Bahasa Inggris: English for Change Grade XI represent experience primarily through material, relational, and mental processes. Material processes dominate the data, indicating that environmental figures are largely represented through concrete action, which suggests that these texts focus on tangible experiences and interactions with the environment. Relational processes strengthen the construction of identity and value. Mental processes provide limited but important access to perception and concern, which can influence how individuals interpret their experiences and shape their identities. Participant analysis further shows that environmental figures are frequently positioned as actors, while circumstantial analysis indicates that actions are anchored in specific places, times, and manners. Together, these patterns construe ecological responsibility as active, local, and socially meaningful.

The study contributes to SFL-based textbook research by showing how transitivity analysis can reveal the experiential design of environmental narratives in Indonesian senior high school EFL materials. Textbook writers should retain action-oriented narratives because they make environmental issues concrete for learners. Even so, future materials need more verbal and mental processes so that students meet more dialogue, disagreement, reflection, and reasoning in environmental discourse. For teachers, the implication is practical: reading activities can ask who acts, who is affected, what qualities are assigned, and whose perspectives are absent. The limitation of this study is that it analyzed only four narrative texts from one textbook unit. Future studies can compare grade levels, textbook series, genres, and multimodal elements to obtain a broader picture of how Indonesian EFL materials grammatically represent social and environmental experience.

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