



An Analysis of Transitivity of the Main Character “Barbie” in the Barbie Movie

Selfiyani Ketaren¹, Tiara Kristina Pasaribu², Jubil Ezer Sihite³

^{1,2,3} Universitas HKBP Nommensen, Medan

selfiyani.ketaren@student.uhn.ac.id, tiarakristina@uhn.ac.id, jubilezer.sihite@uhn.ac.id

Received: 2024-05-20 Accepted: 2025-08-17

DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v13i2.5071

Abstract

This study aims to find out the types of processes that occur and the realization of the transitivity system in Barbie films. With the transitivity system, writer can find out the characters and messages conveyed in the film through the main character in describing her thoughts and feelings. This thesis uses the theory of Systemic Functional Grammar by M. A. K Halliday by using descriptive qualitative method. The data in this study is the Barbie movie script which focuses only on the utterances of the main character, Barbie. The results of the analysis showed that in this movie there were all types of transitivity (6 types) processes. The types of transitivity consist of relational process (140 data) with percentage 44%, material process (79 data) with percentage 25%, mental process (63 data) with percentage 20%, behavioral process (22 data) with percentage 7%, verbal process (11 data) with percentage 3%, and existential process (2 data) with percentage 1%. Relational process is the most common process that appears in this study. Carrier and attribute are the most common participants that appeared in clauses. For circumstance, location is the most common circumstance in clauses, both temporal and spatial location. The relational process indicates that through the role of Barbie, it can be seen this movie provides a detailed explanation of the relationship between one and the other like Barbie's relationship with Ken and also with her creator, Ruth Handler. The movie's script has a good structure because the type of participant and the process have a balance of occurrence in the clause.

Keywords: Systemic Functional Grammar, Ideational Metafunction, Transitivity, Movie;

Introduction

Linguistics is the scientific study of language. Linguistics is focused on the theoretical and descriptive study of language, and it is also related to the applied areas of language studies and language acquisition, which involve the study of

specific languages. Linguistics plays a crucial role in understanding how language decisions, including grammar, vocabulary, and structure, get shaped by social and cultural settings. It studies how language constructs meaning, communicates ideologies and embodies societal roles. Within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), linguists assess how these language choices impact text coherence, power dynamics, and the portrayal of diverse social functions in communication.

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) was developed by Michael Halliday and is a grammatical description method within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), a social semiotic approach to language. 'Systemic' denotes language as a complex network of interconnected systems for meaning creation, while 'functional' reflects Halliday's belief that language has evolved to serve specific purposes. Halliday labels his language functions as "metafunctions." He outlines three main functions: the ideational, interpersonal, and textual. However, in this study, the writer focuses only on ideational meta-function. An analysis of a text from the perspective of the ideational function involves inquiring into the choices in the grammatical system of "transitivity".

In the field of linguistics, transitivity refers to the quality of verbs concerning their ability to have objects and the quantity of such objects they can have. Transitivity is defined as an explanation of how a meaning is represented in a clause. Conventional grammar draws a clear division between intransitive verbs, which don't have a direct object (like "fall" or "sit" in English), and transitive verbs, which require a direct object (like "throw," "injure," or "kiss" in English). In practice, many languages (including English) feature verbs that accommodate two objects (termed ditransitive verbs) or even verbs that can function both as transitive and intransitive (known as ambitransitive verbs, as seen in examples like "She walked the dog" and "She walked with a dog"). The application of transitivity extends across various fields, including political speeches, news articles, medical texts, textbooks, newspapers, discourses, folklore, songs, student writing, educational literature, literary works, and film scripts among others.

Transitivity categorizes a clause into three elements: process, participant, and circumstance. Participants are the entities involved in the process expressed by the verb. These are the sentence's subjects and objects. Circumstances give further details about the process, such as where, when, why, and how it happens. Adverbs or adjuncts are commonly used to convey them. Processes are central to transitivity. The process focuses on the portion of the clause that the verbal group realizes, but it may also be thought of as the representation of the "goings-on" across the whole clause. The process consists of 6 types, namely material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential.

Lately, foreign production films are indeed very interesting and popular in Indonesia. Barbie is one of the films that managed to move millions of Indonesian viewers who flocked to watch this film directed by Greta Gerwig. The writer is

interested in studying the Barbie movie because this movie has become viral. This movie is the only movie in cinemas that poisons the minds of its audience to imitate the style of the main character in the film, starting from the way she speaks and looks. The audience is attracted to this movie because the main character Barbie is a figure who always smiles, friendly, cheerful, confident, thinks positively, and looks attractive every day. In addition, this movie also provides a new perspective on how to think about the reality of life that is not only about perfection but also about self-confidence through the main character of the movie, Barbie. The main character is a very important part and greatly influences the success of delivering messages in a movie.

Therefore, this study is intended to explore Barbie's character in describing her thoughts and feelings through the transitivity process. The object of research in this study is Barbie's utterances which are broken down into clauses rather than sentences. Studying transitivity in linguistics can make a significant contribution to our understanding of language and its use in various contexts. Transitivity is the linguistic representation of experiences outside of language, such as feelings, thoughts, and perceptions. It shows how Barbie describes her way of thinking about reality and how she combines those experiences with the reality around her.

Method

The research design is a sequential process that provides an overall picture of the planning, implementation, and data collection, analysis, and interpretation of data carried out from the beginning to the end of the study. so, the writer used a qualitative descriptive method in this study. The source of data for this study is the transcript of Barbie Movie. It can be traced to <https://scrapsfromtheloft.com/movies/barbie-2023-transcript/> or the Layar Kaca 21 website. The data in this study are utterances that are included in the type of transitivity system. The data collection technique is used to gather data following the research procedures to get the necessary data. Collecting data is the primary goal of research. Data collection techniques in qualitative methods are characterized by flexibility and freedom in terms of the structure and sequence given to the writer. (Kumar, 2011). Data analysis is the process of systematically collecting, managing, and sorting data to answer research problems, whether qualitative or quantitative research.

Here are the steps in analyzing the data:

1. Classifying clauses into the types of transitivity process
2. Describing each process of the transitivity clause
3. Getting the findings at the analysis
4. Discussed the finding
5. Interpreting the finding
6. Making the conclusion

Findings and Discussion

Finding

Research findings are the discoveries that provide solutions to the issues explored within a study. These results hold significance within research as they unveil crucial insights derived from the employed methodologies.

Types of Transitivity Found in The Barbie Movie

Based on the data analysis, it is found that there are six processes in Barbie movie which consist of material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential processes. There are fourteen types of participants found in Barbie movies which consist of actor, goal, senser, phenomenon, attribute, token, value, behavior, sayers, target, verbiage, receiver, and existent. For the circumstances, there are six types which consist of extent, location, manner, cause, matter, and accompaniment.

The Realization of Transitivity Found in The Barbie Movie

The following table shows the realization of transitivity in the movie. Included are the amount of data and the frequency of occurrence.

Table 1. Types of process found in the script

No.	Types of Process	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage (%)
1.	Material	79	25%
2.	Mental	63	20%
3.	Relational	140	44%
4.	Behavioral	22	7%
5.	Verbal	11	3%
6.	Existential	2	1%
Total		317	100%

From the table of occurrence of processes above, it is known that relational process is dominant in each clause. The relational process is 140 data (44%), material process is 79 data (25%), mental process is 63 data (20%), behavioral process is 22 data (7%), verbal process is 11 data (3%), and existential process is 2 data (1%).

Table 2. Types of participants found in the script

No.	Types of Participants	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage (%)
1.	Actor	66	12%
2.	Goal	49	9%
3.	Senser	58	11%
4.	Phenomenon	48	9%
5.	Carrier	91	17%

6.	Attribute	84	16%
7.	Token	47	9%
8.	Value	46	9%
9.	Behaver	20	4%
10.	Sayer	9	2%
11.	Verbiage	4	1%
12.	Target	3	0,6%
13.	Receiver	1	0,1%
14.	Existent	2	0,3%
Total		528	100%

From the table of occurrence of processes above, it is known that carrier as participant 1 is the most common participant that appeared 91 times (17%) and attribute as participant 2 that appeared 84 times (16%). This was followed by actor which appeared 66 times (12%), sensor appeared 58 times (11%), goal appeared 49 times (9%), phenomenon appeared 48 times (9%), token appeared 47 times (9%), value appeared 46 times (9%), behaver appeared 20 times (4%), sayer appeared 9 times (2%), verbiage appeared 4 times (1%), target appeared 3 times (0,6%), existent appeared 2 times (0,3%) and receiver appeared 1 time (0,1%).

Table 3. Types of circumstances found in the script

No.	Types of Circumstances	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage (%)
1.	Extent	1	2%
2.	Location	28	48,2%
3.	Manner	10	17,2%
4.	Cause	7	12%
5.	Contingency	-	-
6.	Role	-	-
7.	Matter	6	10,3%
8.	Accompaniment	6	10,3%
9.	Angle	-	-
Total		58	100%

From the table of occurrence of processes above, it is known that location is the most common type in clauses. Location appears 28 times (48,2%), manner appears 10 times (17,2%), cause appears 7 times (12%), matter appears 6 times (10,3%), accompaniment appears 6 times (10,3%), and extent appears 1 time (2%). 3 types of circumstance do not appear in the clause, namely contingency, role, and angle.

Discussion

Based on previous findings, there are six processes found in the utterances of

the main characters in the Barbie movie namely material process, mental process, relational process, behavioral process, verbal process, and existential process. Based on the findings, material process appears 79 times which can be interpreted as Barbie's utterances containing a lot of physical activity. Where Barbie goes on an adventure to the real world to find her true identity. Mental process appeared 63 times. It can be interpreted that Barbie uses many words that involve the senses, feelings and displays activities that involve desires.

In the process of her self-discovery, Barbie exhibits strange feelings that she has never felt before. Next is the relational process, this process appears 140 times. It can be interpreted that Barbie explains a lot about the relationship between two entities and identifies one identity with another. In addition, behavioral process appeared 22 times. It can be interpreted that Barbie wants to exhibit physical behaviors that show inner states such as tiredness. The verbal process occurred 11 times. It can be interpreted that Barbie wants to make all information conveyed clearly and there is no misunderstanding. The last is the existential process which appears 2 times. It can be interpreted that the movie shows the presence or absence of someone or something at a certain time.

Based on the findings, all types of participants appear, namely actor, goal, sensor, phenomenon, attribute, token, value, behavior, say, target, verbiage, receiver, and existent. This shows the balance between participant and verb in these clauses. The most frequent participant type is carrier and attribute which is participant 1 and 2 of the relational process which is also the most frequent process type. Meanwhile, the occurrence of circumstance is minimal in the clauses. There are only six types that appear, namely extent, location, manner, cause, matter, and accompaniment. Circumstance is an additional information to better understand the text but it is optional in the clause.

The transitivity system realized in Barbie movie can be seen in the verbs contained in each clause. As in the material process, examples of verbs that are realized are given, bring, go, open, fix, etc. Mental process verbs that are realized are known, want, feel, love, hate, etc. Relational process verbs that are realized are is, are, were, was, have, etc. Behavioral process verbs that are realized are think, look, dream, sit, cry, etc. Verbal process verbs that are realized are say, describe, talk, call, etc. The existential process verb that is realized is there.

Based on previous studies, the result of the study was quite similar to what Ammara et al. (2019) "A Corpus-Based Halliday's Transitivity Analysis of 'To the Lighthouse'" found all six processes in their study and the type of process appears most often is relational process. However, there are several different findings, namely the amount of data, the method used, and the different objects. There are also differences in the discovery of participants and circumstances. In this study, the most common participants are actor and goal and the most common type of circumstance is manner while in the writer's study, it is found that carrier and

attribute are the most common types of participants and location is the most common type of circumstance.

Furthermore, Iqbal et al. (2023) "Islamophobia and the Issue of Jammu & Kashmir: A Corpus-based Transitivity Analysis of Imran Khan's Speech at UNGA" found material process is the type of process that appears the most and this is different from that found in the writer's study. In addition, there are also other differences, namely the amount of data, the method used, and the object studied.

The result of the study was different from what (Asad et al., 2019) "Social Actors' Representation in Online Malaysian Newspapers during Elections: A Transitivity Analysis of Newspaper Text" found the verbal process as the most dominant process and verbiage as the dominant type of participant while in the writer's study, it is found that relational process is the most common type of process appears and carrier & attribute are the most common type of participants. In addition, there are also other differences, namely the amount of data, the method used, and the object studied.

The result of the study was different from what Hutabarat et al. (2020) "An Analysis of Ideational Metafunction on News Jakarta Post about Some Good Covid-19 Related News" found 5 types of processes namely material, mental, relational, behavioral, and verbal while in the writer's study found 6 types of process namely material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal and existential. In addition, in this study, the types of process, participants and circumstances that appear the most are material, actors and extents. Whereas in the writer's study, the types of process, participants, and circumstance that appear the most are relational, carrier & attribute, and location. Besides that, there are also other differences, namely the amount of data and the object studied.

The result of the study was different from what Sinambela et al. (2023) "Analysis of Experiential Function on the Jakarta Post about Opinion Academy Robot and AI: A New Economic Era" found material process as the most dominant process, actor as the dominant type of participant and contingency as the dominant type of circumstance while in the writer's study, it is found that relational process is the most common type of process appears, carrier & attribute as the most common type of participants and location as the most common type of circumstance. In addition, there are also other differences, namely the amount of data and the object studied.

It can be concluded that relational processes can be found in novels, newspapers, speech, or movies. Relational process is an existence relationship that is set up between two separate entities (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Relational process is the process that appears the most in this study and carrier & attribute appear as the most common participants. It can be interpreted that Barbie can represent her experiences, both outer and inner experiences by emphasizing the process as "being" rather than "doing" or "feeling".

In her self-discovery process, Barbie identifies the existing relationship between two entities. Barbie finds out the relationship between Barbie and Ken,

which is still uncertain. And it turns out that Barbie and Ken are not two entities that cannot be separated. Ken is just Ken and Barbie is Barbie. Ken can live without Barbie and vice versa. In addition, Barbie also gets answers about her relationship and her creator. Barbie was created by Ruth Handler but that doesn't mean that her life can only be controlled by her creator. Barbie has the right to make decisions about her own life.

The most interesting finding in this study is transitivity system can analyze movies that have never been studied by previous studies. Most previous studies have found that materials are the most dominant type of process followed by actors as the dominant participants. There is one previous study that found relational as the most dominant process but the dominant participants were actors and goals. The results of this Barbie movie study show that relational is the most dominant process followed by carrier & attribute as the dominant participants. This shows that the clauses have a good structure. In addition, the new discovery that the writer found is the type of circumstance. Previous studies only found extent, contingency, and manner as the dominant circumstance. Whereas in this study, it is found that location is the dominant circumstance.

Conclusion

After conducting the study on Barbie movie, there are the following conclusions.

1. The total data is 317 clauses that are included in the transitivity system. The types of transitivity processes, which are found in this study are material process, mental process, relational process, behavioral process, verbal process, and existential process. The relational process is 140 data (44%), material process is 79 data (25%), mental process is 63 data (20%), behavioral process is 22 data (7%), verbal process is 11 data (3%), and existential process is 2 data (1%).
2. Relational process is the most common process that appears in this study. The relational process indicates that through the role of Barbie, it can be seen this movie provides a detailed explanation of the relationship between one and the other. Barbie also gets answers about her relationship and her creator. Barbie was created by Ruth Handler but that doesn't mean that her life can only be controlled by her creator. Barbie has the right to make decisions about her own life.
3. It was concluded that the carrier as participant 1 was the most frequent participant, which appeared 91 times, and attribute as participant 2 that appeared 84 times. The carrier and attribute are the participants in the attributive relational. This shows that the clauses have a good structure.
4. There are 3 types of circumstances that do not appear in the clause, namely contingency, role, and angle. Location is the most common circumstance in clauses, both temporal and spatial location. This helps Barbie to explain more about when and where the action was taken.

References

- Abdulameer, A. et. (2019). Systemic Functional Linguistics of Political Article. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, 7(5), 24–31. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2019.753>
- Abduh, N. K., & Masruddin, M. (2023). Structural Studies of Robert Stanton in The Folklore of Luwu (Worongporong dan Pariama). *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 11(1), 117-126.
- Ammara, U., Anjum, R. Y., & Javed, M. (2019). A Corpus-Based Halliday's Transitivity Analysis of 'To the Lighthouse.' *Linguistics and Literature Review*, 05(02), 139–162. <https://doi.org/10.32350/llr.52.05>
- Asad, S., Mohd Noor, S. N. F. B., & Jaes, L. Bin. (2019). Social actors' representation in online malaysian newspapers during elections: A transitivity analysis of newspaper text. *Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews*, 7(4), 580–589. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2019.7478>
- Banks, D. (2019). A Systemic Functional Grammar of English: A Simple Introduction. In *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research* (Vol. 7, Issue 2). Routledge. https://ijltr.urmia.ac.ir/article_120703.html
- Bauer, M. W., & Gaskell, G. (2000). *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound*. Sage Publication.
- Eggins. (2004). *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics: 2nd Edition*. In Continuum International Publishing Group. Continuum international Publishing Group. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01476765>
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2004). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (third edit). Oxford University Press Inc. https://www.functionalmedicine.org/files/library/Intro_Functional_Medicine.pdf
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). Halliday's introduction to functional grammar: Fourth edition. In *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar: Fourth Edition*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203431269>
- Hoey, M., Mahlberg, M., Stubbs, M., & Teubert, W. (2007). *Text, Discourse and Corpora* (Continuum).
- Hutabarat, E., Herman, H., Silalahi, D. E., & Sihombing, P. S. R. (2020). An Analysis of Ideational Metafunction on News Jakarta Post about Some Good Covid-19 Related News. *VELES Voices of English Language Education Society*, 4(2), 142–151. <https://doi.org/10.29408/veles.v4i2.2526>
- Iqbal, R. H., Sabiri, M. S., & Batool, R. (2023). Islamophobia and the Issue of Jammu & Kashmir: A Corpus-based Transitivity Analysis of Imran Khan's Speech at Unga. *Research Journal of Social Sciences & Economics Review*, 4(1), 8–17. [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36902/rjsser-vol4-iss1-2023\(8-17\)](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36902/rjsser-vol4-iss1-2023(8-17))
- Kumar, R. (2011). *Research Methodology* (third). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Kuswoyo, H. (2019). Process Types of Transitivity System in Engineering Lecture Introduction: A Pedagogic Discourse. *Lingua: Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 19.

- <https://ejournal.unsri.ac.id/index.php/lingua/article/view/11080>
- McCabe, A. (2011). *An Introduction to Linguistics and Language Studies* (R. Fawcett (ed.)). Equinox publishing Ltd.
- Rahmawati, U. (2019). Process Types of Transitivity in Recount Text Written By Eleventh Graders of Isat-U Senior High School Philippines in Academic Year 2018/2019. *Journal of Research on Applied Linguistics, Language, and Language Teaching*, 2(1), 67–75. <https://doi.org/10.31002/jrlt.v2i1.366>
- Rumapea, T. E., Rangkuti, D. D., & Pasaribu, A. N. (2022). Character construction of songs in Kidung Jemaat: A transitivity analysis. *Journal Education and Development, Institut Pendidikan Tapanuli Selatan*, 10(2), 482–486.
- Rustam, R. (2023). Sinopsis Film Barbie, Kisah Petualangan Barbie dan Ken ke Dunia Nyata. DetikSulsel. <https://www.detik.com/sulsel/berita/d-6832309/sinopsis-film-barbie-kisah-petualangan-barbie-dan-ken-ke-dunia-nyata>
- Sameer, I. H., & Al Dilaimy, H. H. (2020). Ideational Aspect of Systemic Functional Grammar in Bush's and Al-Assad's First Inaugural Speech. *Talent Development & Excellence*, 12(2), 1203–1218.
- Setiawan, E. I., Masruddin, M., & Zainuddin, Z. (2023). Semiotic Analysis and Ethnography Study on the Implementation of Local Wisdom in Economic Field at Luwu Society. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 11(2), 1912-1925.
- Sinambela, R., Bulu, A. G. D., Sirait, S. G. A., & ... (2023). Analysis of Experiential Function on The Jakarta Post about Opinion Academy Robot and AI: A New Economic Era. *Jurnal Scientia*, 12(03), 3158–3162. <http://infor.seaninstitute.org/index.php/pendidikan/article/view/1680%0Ahttp://infor.seaninstitute.org/index.php/pendidikan/article/download/1680/1374>
- Sipayung, K. T., Sinaga, N. T., Sianipar, M. O. C., & Napitupulu, F. D. (2016). Metafunction Realization on Students' Descriptive Paragraphs. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 8(6), 20. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v8i6.10264>
- Widdowson, H. G. (1996). *Linguistics Oxford Introduction to Language Study Series* 1996. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Wikipedia. (2023). Barbie (film). In Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbie_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbie_(film))