TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS IN NEWS DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze and describe the linguistic representation of Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) Programme in international news discourse through the transitivity system of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) proposed by Halliday. A descriptive qualitative research design was employed. The data consisted of clauses extracted from an online news report published by Reuters entitled "Parents of Indonesian Children Sickened by Free School Meals File Police Complaint", authored by Ananda Teresia on September 11, 2026. The findings revealed a total of 82 process occurrences. Material processes were the most dominant type with 46 occurrences (56.1%), followed by verbal processes with 22 occurrences (26.8%), relational processes with 12 occurrences (14.6%), and mental processes with 2 occurrences (2.4%). Meanwhile, behavioural and existential processes were absent. The predominance of material processes indicates that Reuters primarily constructs the MBG Programme through concrete actions, legal procedures, institutional responses, and factual events. Verbal processes serve to attribute statements to various sources, supporting source attribution, although it does not by itself establish neutrality, while relational processes provide descriptions and political contexts. The scarcity of mental processes reflects a journalistic focus on objective events rather than subjective emotions. This study concludes that transitivity analysis is effective in uncovering how grammatical choices shape readers' understanding of the MBG Programme as an evolving public issue involving legal accountability and social responsibility.

***Keywords**: Transitivity, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), News Discourse, Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) Programme, Reuters*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dan mendeskripsikan representasi linguistik Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) Indonesia dalam wacana berita

internasional melalui sistem transitivitas dalam Linguistik Fungsional Sistemik (SFL) yang digagas oleh Halliday. Desain penelitian deskriptif kualitatif digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Data berupa klausa yang diekstrak dari laporan berita online yang diterbitkan oleh Reuters berjudul "Parents of Indonesian Children Sickened by Free School Meals File Police Complaint", yang ditulis oleh Ananda Teresia pada 11 September 2026. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan total 82 kemunculan proses. Proses material menjadi tipe yang paling dominan dengan 46 kemunculan (56,1%), diikuti oleh proses verbal dengan 22 kemunculan (26,8%), proses relasional dengan 12 kemunculan (14,6%), dan proses mental dengan 2 kemunculan (2,4%). Sementara itu, proses perilaku dan eksistensial tidak ditemukan. Dominasi proses material menunjukkan bahwa Reuters terutama mengonstruksi Program MBG melalui tindakan konkret, prosedur hukum, respons institusional, dan peristiwa faktual. Proses verbal berfungsi untuk mengatribusikan pernyataan kepada berbagai sumber, yang mendukung atribusi sumber, meskipun hal itu sendiri tidak serta-merta menunjukkan netralitas, sementara proses relasional memberikan deskripsi dan konteks politik. Kelangkaan proses mental mencerminkan fokus jurnalistik pada peristiwa objektif daripada emosi subjektif. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa analisis transitivitas efektif dalam mengungkap bagaimana pilihan gramatikal membentuk pemahaman pembaca tentang Program MBG sebagai isu publik yang berkembang yang melibatkan akuntabilitas hukum dan tanggung jawab sosial.

Kata Kunci: Transitivitas, Linguistik Fungsional Sistemik (SFL), Wacana Berita, Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG), Reuters.

A. Introduction

Language is not merely a medium Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), for conveying events; it structures this concept is delineated through threemetafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Halliday, 1978, as cited in Alabdali & Alyousef, 2025, p. 335). The experiential function, encompassed by the ideational metafunction, illustrates how individuals who use language depict actions, the participants involved, and the contexts in which these actions occur (Alabdali & Alyousef, 2025, p. 335). News articles are a form of text where such representations are significant, as audiences gain insights into societal occurrences through the choices made by writers in their clauses. An illustrative case in Indonesia is the *Makan Bergizi Gratis* (MBG) Program, a flagship initiative of

President Prabowo Subianto providing complimentary meals to schoolage children and expecting mothers, managed by the National Nutrition Agency (*Badan Gizi Nasional*) (Teresia, 2026). The initiative has also been highlighted in relation to instances of
children becoming unwell after consuming these meals, with a police report submitted by 60 parents, which Reuters labeled as the initial legal action against the program (Teresia, 2026). Such articles entail various stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, students, and guardians, thus they incorporate clauses regarding the actions, statements, and experiences of these individuals.

The purpose of this research is to illustrate how the transitivity framework can be utilized to interpret a news article regarding the MBG Program through its grammatical structure, rather than merely its subject matter. By investigating the various process types present within the clauses, this research outlines how the program and the associated individuals are represented as performing actions, communicating, existing, or experiencing perceptions. The matter examined is that process types are not visible when a report is read only for its content. A reader may remember that parents made a complaint, but the language used helps to specify if the text describes the event as an action (material process), a statement (verbal process), a situation (relational process), or a feeling or thought (mental process). As a result, this research focuses on a particular article from Reuters regarding the MBG Program (Teresia, 2026) and raises one main question: What process types are found in the clauses of the Reuters news report on the MBG Program?

Transitivity analysis has been utilized on news articles to examine how various processes are allocated. Alhumsi, Suliman, Sendi, and Alshaye (2021) studied two university news articles, one published before and one during the coronavirus pandemic, and discovered that material processes were prevalent in both. They determined that this prevalence is a significant characteristic of educational discourse in the workplace, since the participants convey messages that include concrete actions (p. 36). Their research indicates that the distribution of process types correlates with the

nature of the text and the activities of its participants (pp. 35–36). The current research applies the same analytical framework to a different type of text, specifically a report regarding a developing public event, in which the actions of institutions are documented alongside the remarks of those impacted. In such a report, one cannot assume the distribution of process types beforehand and must derive it through a thorough clause by clause examination.

Based on the problem above, this study aims to identify and classify each clause of the Reuters news report on the MBG Program according to its process type, and to describe the process types found and their distribution.

This study uses the transitivity system, which, according to Halliday (1967) in Alhumsi et al. (2021, p. 25), is a network of systems that originates in the major clause. Transitivity is the grammatical system through which the clause represents experience. It consists of three elements: the process, typically realized by the verbal group; the participants, realized by nouns or nominal groups; and the circumstances, realized by adverbial and prepositional groups (Alabdali & Alyousef, 2025, p. 335). In this study, transitivity refers to the whole system, while process type refers to the category of clause meaning that is classified within it. The unit of analysis is the clause, because transitivity operates at the clause level (Eggins, 2004, as cited in Alabdali & Alyousef, 2025, p. 341).

Six process types are distinguished (Halliday, 2014, as cited in Alabdali & Alyousef, 2025, p. 336). Material processes are processes of doing and happening, with the Actor and the Goal as participants. Mental processes are processes of sensing (perception, cognition, and affection), with the Senser and the Phenomenon. Relational processes are processes of being and having, with two modes: attributive (Carrier and Attribute) and identifying (Token and Value). Verbal processes are processes of saying, with the Sayer, the Receiver, and the Verbiage. Behavioral processes are physiological or psychological behavior, with the Behaver as the only participant. Existential processes represent that something exists or happens, with the Existent as the only participant, usually in a “there is/are” structure (Alhumsi et al., 2021, pp. 25–26, 28; Alabdali & Alyousef, 2025, pp.

343– 344, 347–350). Each clause in the data was classified by the meaning of its main verb and the participants involved, and not by the verb form alone.

B. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design utilizing the transitivity system of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) proposed by Halliday (as cited in Alhumsi et al., 2021) to analyze the linguistic representation of the Indonesian Free Nutritious Meals (Makan Bergizi Gratis / MBG) Programme in international news discourse. The primary focus was to identify, classify, and interpret the process types in the text to explain how social actors, legal actions, and institutional responses are grammatically constructed. The data source for this research was an online news article published by Reuters, entitled "Parents of Indonesian children sickened by free school meals file police complaint", authored by Ananda Teresia on September 11, 2026. The research data consisted of clauses extracted from the news report. Each clause served as the basic unit of analysis, as transitivity operates primarily at the clause level (Eggins, 2004, as cited in Alabdali & Alyousef, 2025).

C. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the transitivity analysis of the Reuters news report “Parents of Indonesian Children Sickened by Free School Meals File Police Complaint” (Teresia, 2026). The clauses were classified according to the six process types in the transitivity system: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioural, and existential. A total of 82 process occurrences were identified in the analyzed report. Their distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Transitivity Process Types in the Reuters Report

Process Type	Frequency	Percentage
Material	46	56.1%
Verbal	22	26.8%
Relational	12	14.6%
Mental	2	2.4%
Behavioural	0	0.0%
Existential	0	0.0%
Total	**82**	**99.9%***

As shown in Table 1, material processes are the most frequent, with 46 occurrences (56.1%). Verbal processes rank second with 22 occurrences (26.8%), followed by

relational processes with 12 occurrences (14.6%). Mental processes occur twice (2.4%), while no behavioural or existential processes were identified in the coded data.

The percentages total 99.9% because each category is rounded to one decimal place.

Discussion

The findings show that material processes are the dominant process type in the Reuters report. In Systemic Functional Linguistics, material processes construe actions and events (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Their high frequency is consistent with the report's focus on events related to the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) Programme, including children becoming ill and parents taking legal action. This pattern suggests that the report primarily organizes the issue around actions and developments that can be presented as news events. However, the frequency alone does not establish the journalist's intention or prove that every material clause carries the same meaning.

Verbal processes form the second-largest category, with 22 occurrences (26.8%). Verbal processes represent acts of saying and can attribute information to sources. Their presence is important in news discourse because reported statements allow the article to present claims or responses from people and institutions involved in the issue. Nevertheless, the number of verbal processes by itself cannot prove that the report is completely neutral; neutrality would require a closer analysis of the sources selected, the wording of their statements, and how those statements are contextualized.

Relational processes account for 12 occurrences (14.6%). These processes construe relationships of being, having, or identifying and can provide descriptions or background information. In this report, they complement the account of actions by describing people, circumstances, or aspects of the MBG Programme. Mental processes occur only twice (2.4%), indicating that sensing— such as perception, thought, or feeling— is represented less frequently through this grammatical process type in the analyzed clauses. This result should not be interpreted as evidence that the people involved had no emotions; it only describes how experience is grammatically represented in this

particular report. No behavioural or existential processes were identified in the coding.

The overall pattern is broadly consistent with previous studies by Fadilah and Kuswoyo (2021), Hutabarat et al. (2020), and Klaisingto and Khamyangyuen (2024), which also reported material processes as a prominent category in their respective news data. This similarity suggests that actions and events can be prominent in news texts, although the studies examine different texts and contexts. The present study differs in its focus on a single Reuters report concerning the MBG Programme; therefore, the findings should not be generalized to all Reuters reports or to news discourse as a whole. The publication year and bibliographic details of Klaisingto and Khamyangyuen should be checked against the journal's official record before the final manuscript is submitted.

In relation to the research question—what process types are found in the clauses of the Reuters report—the analysis identified material, verbal, relational, and mental processes. Material processes were the most frequent. The analysis illustrates how transitivity can be used to describe the grammatical resources through which a news report represents a public issue. A limitation is that the study examines only one article and the categorization of clauses requires linguistic judgment. Future studies could analyze a larger set of reports and provide selected clause-level examples, including process and participant labels, to make the analysis easier to verify.

D. Conclusion

Based on the findings, this study concludes that material processes are the most dominant process type in the Reuters news report about Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) Programme, with 46 occurrences (56.1%), followed by verbal processes with 22 occurrences (26.8%), relational processes with 12 occurrences (14.6%), and mental processes with 2 occurrences (2.4%). Meanwhile, behavioural and existential processes were not found in the data. These findings indicate that the news report primarily represents the MBG Programme through concrete actions, legal procedures, institutional

activities, and government responses rather than personal feelings or subjective opinions.

Furthermore, verbal processes help present information from various sources, including parents, lawyers, police representatives, and government officials, while relational processes describe the significance of the programme and its connection to the government's political commitments. The limited use of mental processes shows that personal feelings receive less emphasis than factual events and public responses. These findings are consistent with Halliday's transitivity theory and the previous study by Alhumsi et al. (2021), which also found that material processes dominated news discourse. Therefore, this study demonstrates that transitivity analysis is useful for understanding how grammatical choices represent social events and shape readers' understanding of public issues. In the Reuters report, the MBG Programme is constructed as an evolving public issue involving social responsibility, legal accountability, and government intervention.

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