

The Representation of Social Media in English Textbook: A Hallidayan Perspective

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Abstract

This Hallidayan transitivity study explores how social media is represented in the reading texts of a nationally issued English textbook for Indonesian year-twelve students. In particular, this study aims to reveal the transitivity system patterns constructed in the reading materials about social media. This study adopted qualitative perspective as the approach and content/text analysis as the method. The data were reading materials of three chapters selected purposely from an English textbook. The reading texts then were analysed into Hallidayan six types of process, namely material, mental, behavioural, verbal, existential, and relational clauses. After that, each process type was further analysed. The findings firstly reveal that material (55%), mental (30%), and relational clauses (12%) appear in sequence as the dominant process types. Other processes were also found in the data but their occurrences are limited, namely 1% for each of behavioural, verbal, and existential clauses. Secondly, the findings expose that each process type is patterned distinctively in representing different issues about social media. It is expected that the findings of this study contribute to how to represent events in English textbooks functionally so that the educational goal set by book can be obtained. Despite its findings, this study relies only on a single book as the data source. Further studies can make use of more data sets.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The landscape of communication has been undergoing a seismic shift. Social media, for example, have transcended the initial purpose of simple communication, evolving into powerful tools for self-expression, information dissemination, and global cultural exchange. This rise of social media presents benefits for language education. This mode of communication, for example, offers exciting opportunities to enhance student engagement. Concerning language and education, social media provides a window into authentic language use, exposing students to the nuances of everyday communication across different cultures [1]. As the communication landscape transforms, social media presents a compelling opportunity to create a dynamic and culturally rich learning environment for language acquisition. However, concerns about digital literacy skills and the potential for distractions require educators to carefully consider how social media can be leveraged effectively. Striking a balance between fostering online interaction and ensuring that students possess the necessary critical thinking skills to navigate the digital world is paramount. They become very popular and play an important role in all domains of our lives, especially in education [2]. Therefore, only through a thoughtful integration that addresses this challenge can social media truly enhance language learning in the digital age. One of the main educational resources that cater for social media literacy is textbooks.

Textbooks as the foundational resources in educational systems worldwide offer a structured and scaffolded presentation of language, breaking down complex concepts into manageable steps that facilitate student understanding [3] & [4]. This is particularly

beneficial for language learners, as it provides a clear roadmap for building proficiency. Furthermore, as Smith and Jones [5] highlighted, the content within textbooks plays a pivotal role in shaping students' language skills and cultural awareness. Textbooks introduce students to diverse perspectives and ways of life, fostering a deeper understanding of the world around them including social media literacy. Analysing the representation of social media within English textbooks provides insight into how language education is adapting to the evolving landscape of communication.

Until now, existing research has explored the potential benefits of social media in language learning, highlighting its ability to enhance engagement, foster collaboration, and expose students to authentic language use [6]. However, a comprehensive investigation into how social media is integrated within Indonesian English textbooks, particularly in the context of the recently implemented Merdeka curriculum, is lacking. This lack is particularly concerning given the Merdeka curriculum's emphasis on fostering student autonomy, critical thinking skills, and real-world language application [7]. Social media platforms inherently offer opportunities for these skills, making a clear understanding of their integration within textbooks crucial.

What more matters is that to the best of our knowledge, no linguistic studies have examined social media representation in English textbooks using functional perspective. This study offers Systemic Functional Linguistics especially the system of transitivity as the analysis framework. The transitivity system is associated with the choices of processes along with the roles and patterns of participants and circumstances [8]–[10].

Based on the Hallidayan experiential framework, language including English represents experiences into six types of process, namely material, mental, verbal, behavioural, existential, and relational clauses [8], [9]. As set by Halliday & Matthiessen (2004, 2014)[8], [9], material clauses represent actions, activities, and other physical events such as doing and happening while mental clauses construe psychological events in the perception, cognition, and emotion like seeing, thinking, and feeling. In terms of mental processes, it is commonly categorised into perception, cognition, and emotion [8], [9]. However, there is also another version that classifies mental process into perception, cognition, affection, and volition [11]. Further, when a process is the combination between physical and psychological event like smile, laugh, etc., it is classified as a behavioural clause [8]–[10], [12]. The third type of process is verbal clauses representing events in the 'mouth'. This type of process is commonly known as the process of saying [8]–[10], [12].

Another type of process is existential clauses employed to represent the existence of something (See Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014; Martin et al., 1997). In English, this process is commonly initialized by 'there'. The last type of process known as the most abstract one is relational clauses. This type of process is considered abstract because it does not construe events, rather it creates meaning relation by attributing, characterizing, or identifying. In English, as pointed out by Halliday & Matthiessen (2004, 2014), relational clauses are commonly signalled by the use of 'to be' or 'to have'.

In linguistic studies, the use of a transitivity system for text analyses discloses the 'real' meaning behind a text. It even reveals how meaning is packed intentionally to obtain a particular goal. The Hallidayan transitivity-based studies of Manar (2024, 2016), Manar et al. (2020), Manar & Dewanti (2023), and Manar & Purwaningrum (2021) have successfully revealed that meaning is created purposively through the choices of process, participant, and circumstance types. His most current study entitled "The representation of taboos in proverbs : An anthropological and functional perspective", to illustrate, has proved that the choices of process, participant, and circumstance types play a role in creating meaning of taboo expressions for the expectation that the prohibited actions are not conducted by the society.

Further, systemic functional linguistics especially the system of transitivity has been claimed as one of the most current issues on the studies of language [18]. It has been found as the linguistic framework that is open for other linguistic theories for blending even for other disciplines. This is due to its critical, holistic, and applied approach in addressing humanistic problems that grow towards complexity.

To the present time, to the best of our knowledge, there has been no linguistic scrutiny that employs systemic functional linguistics especially transitivity system in disclosing how meaning towards social media is created in English textbooks. Thus, this study aims at analysing the texts about social media in a nationally issued English textbook for Indonesian 12th graders. To obtain this purpose, the research question is formulated as follows: “How is social media represented in the reading materials of English textbook for Indonesian 12th graders?”

2. METHODS

This study utilized qualitative approach and content/text analysis method, namely by employing SFL transitivity system framework in analysing how social media is portrayed in an English textbook for senior high school students in Indonesia. While qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration of the text, providing a nuanced understanding of the portrayal [19], content analysis allows examining textual data by systematically identifying and categorizing how social media is portrayed in the book.

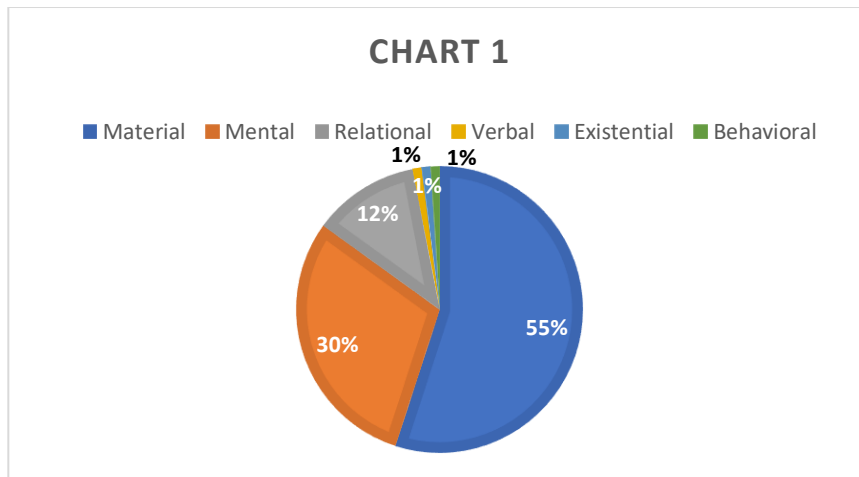
Specifically, this study analysed social media representation in a nationally issued English text book. The analysis limited its focus on three chapters of the textbook. Content analysis, a research technique used to study communication, involves coding text data at various levels (words, phrases, sentences, or themes) to identify patterns and recurring concepts [20]. In the present study, the linguistic unit set as the parameter of analysis is clauses. A clause contains one process.

The clauses in the texts about social media were analysed into six types of process. The six types of process are material, mental, behavioural, verbal, existential, and relational. After each clause was classified according to its process type, the participant and circumstance of each process were also analysed. Finally, each process type was further analysed.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

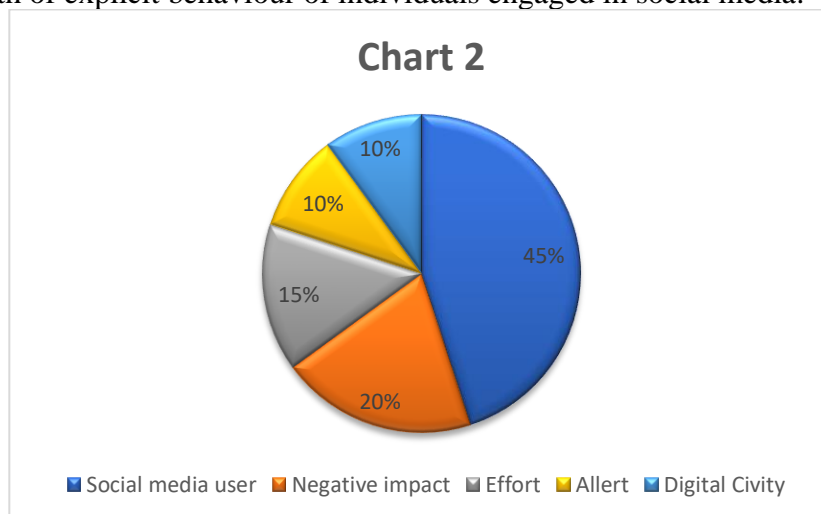
3.1. Findings

The current SFL-based text-analysis study aims to explore how social media is represented in an English textbook. This issue is firstly responded in chart 1. This chart shows the distribution of process types in representing social media. As seen in the following chart 1, the reported process types include material, mental, verbal, behavioural, existential, and relational.



The dominant process found in the text is the material process, which covers 55% of the text, indicating a significant focus on the application of social media in everyday life. On the other hand, mental processes account for 30% of the text, which reflects that social media has a strong mental impact on users who use it. This shows that the three texts in the English textbook for grade 12 Indonesian students, not only highlight the uses of social media but also explain the impact of influence on social media users. Apart from material and mental processes, relational processes account for 12% of the text, providing a stronger emphasis on cause-and-effect relationships, social media benefits, users, and social media influence.

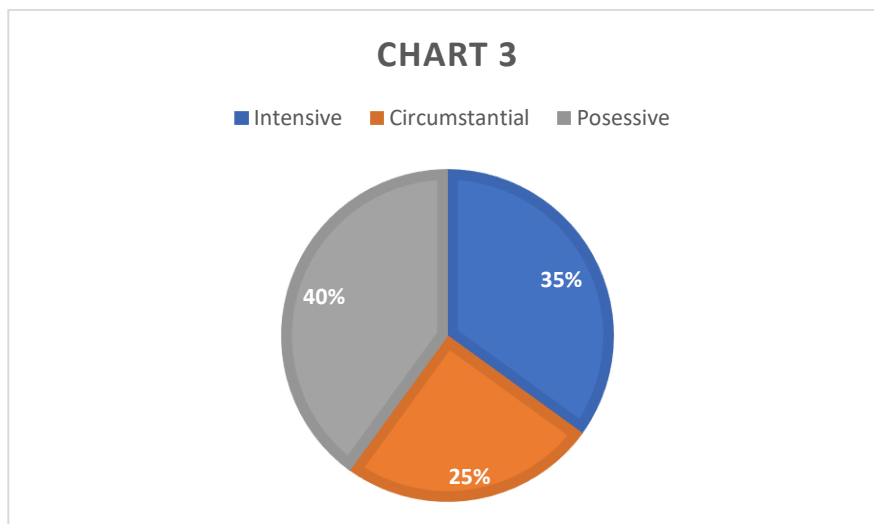
Further, there is approximately 1% verbal processing in the text, indicating that verbal processing is less prevalent, reflecting a reduced focus on direct communication or expression. Another process type found in the analysed texts is an existential clause. This type of process only contributes 1% to the text, indicating a relatively low focus on the existence of entities related to social media. This implies that the text does not extensively highlight the presence or existence of the elements in the social media framework being discussed. The last type of process type is behavioural clauses accounting for only 1%. This implies that the narrative or content does not explore the breadth of explicit behaviour of individuals engaged in social media.



As displayed in chart 2, this research reveals different contents represented in the texts about social media. The most frequent issue represented in the material clauses found in the reading materials of English textbook is about the use of social media, that is 45%. The second highest content represented in the reading texts is about the negative impact of using social media such as hate speech and cybercrime, namely 20%. Despite

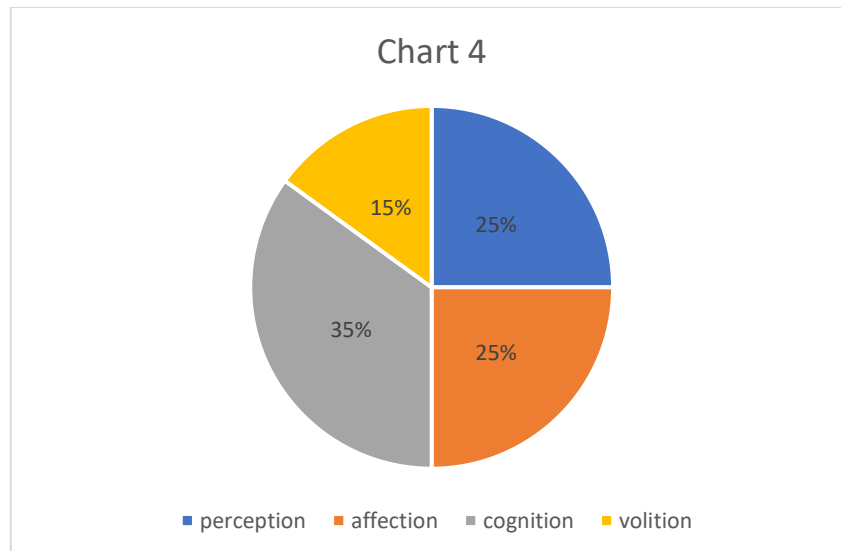
this issue, there is the emphasis on endeavour to reduce the negative impact through digital literacy and better regulations. This third frequent content appears about 15%. Apart from that, the reading texts also represent the issues on alertness in using social media as well as the digital cavity, counted 10% of each. This phenomenon, for example, reflects the importance of being careful in sharing personal information on social media and the negative impacts that can occur if too much personal information is shared.

Social media platforms are not always safe, and users need to be aware of various possible threats. Hate speech, fraud, privacy threats, and reputation risks are some examples of negative impacts that can arise from social media use. These threats can affect a person's online experience and even impact real life. Therefore, users need to understand these risks and take steps to protect themselves. Further, based on the findings on the issue, it is found that the government and related institutions need to formulate better regulations for the digital community, as well as to increase digital literacy among the public.



Based on the data displayed on chart 3, it is known that the most frequent specific relational clauses in the reading text of English textbook are the possessive one, namely 40%. The second frequent processes are intensive relational clauses, namely 35%. The lowest number of relational processes is the circumstantial one, counted 25%. The findings on specific relational clauses show the emphasis on the distinct relationship of meaning found on social media use.

Mostly, social media is represented as something that may have negative impact on the users such as hate speech and insecurity. Thus, the users of social media are also represented as individuals that need to have entities or attributes for the better use of cyber social platform. Social media users, to illustrate, are expected to be both critical and active in participating in the cyber society. Besides, they are expected to be information producers, apart from their role the ‘consumers’ of information.



Based on chart 4, in the context of social media use, each of the perceptive and affective mental processes found in the English textbook appears at 25%. Apart from that, the process of cognition occurs about 35%. The lowest percentage of mental process distribution is volition, namely 15%. The findings on specific mental processes indicate that most events about social media are associated with our cognitive ability. This might indicate that using social media needs thoughtful consideration. In other words, rationality is needed when ‘surfing’ in the cyber society especially in the world of social media. By relying on rationality, a user of social media is expected to receive benefit from social media without being affected by its harmful effect.

This fourth finding reflects that the book is written well for ideal education. As has been known, the users of the English textbook are Indonesian students of year-12 level. It has been perceived that one of the highest groups using social media actively is the teenagers including senior high school students.

3.2. Discussion

The present qualitative text analysis delves into the representation of social media in a nationally issued English textbook designed for twelfth-grade Indonesian students. This purpose of the study is firstly responded through the analysis of process distribution in reading texts of the selected book. Based on the findings from the analysis of an English textbook designed for Indonesian 12th graders, there is a pronounced emphasis on distinct process types along with the topics related to social media. The dominant processes of material, mental, and relational clauses are constructed to create meaning towards social media.

In general, the current analysis highlights a predominant focus on social media processes within the text, indicating a significant emphasis on its application and impact in everyday life. The distribution of process types illustrates that material processes constitute the majority, followed by mental and relational processes. This suggests that the content not only discusses the uses of social media but also delves into its psychological and relational implications.

In terms of material clauses alone, there is an emphasis on the portraying social media as daily activities. Further examination of the material processes reveals a multifaceted discussion covering various aspects such as the positive and negative impacts of social media, digital literacy, and regulatory measures. This comprehensive exploration underscores the complexity of social media dynamics and its implications for users. When an event is realised by material clauses, the meaning is packed

intensively with an actor as the source of power and goal as the affected entity (See Al Fajri, 2018; Kosha & Shams, 2005; Manar, 2024, 2016; Manar et al., 2020). Thus, it can be claimed that the dominant use of material clauses along with their various issues plays a functional linguistic strategy for the expectation that the purpose brought by the textbook can be achieved.

Another process type, relational clauses in the finding, delineates the intricate relationships fostered through social media usage, including intensive, possessive, and circumstantial relationships. These relationships shed light on the diverse social interactions facilitated by social media platforms, encompassing both positive and negative aspects. The negative aspect, for example, is represented by using possessive relational clauses connecting social media with its negative impact on users. As it has been known, the attitude towards an entity especially thing can be loaded with positive or negative meaning by means of relational clauses [14], [22], [23]. Hence it can be pointed out that relational clauses play a functional role in shaping image towards a thing. In the present study, there is the tendency to portray the impact that social media might have on the users.

In relation to mental clauses, as classified by Lock [11], the analysis in chart 4 underscores the importance of perceptions, cognition, affection, and volition concerning social media usage. Additionally, the impact of social relationships established through social media on individuals' emotional and cognitive states is highlighted. The emphasis on cognitive mental clauses indicates that there is a need to employ rational consideration when 'surfing' in the cyber media especially social media. This is important to social media users as a way for benefitting from social media and avoiding its harming effects.

Another process type found in the finding is verbal clauses. However, the frequency of occurrences is not significant. The examination of verbal processes, as categorized by Chen (2004), showcases a balanced representation of positive, negative, and neutral verbal processes within the text. This reflects a nuanced portrayal of the advantages and disadvantages of social media, contributing to a more holistic understanding of its impact.

Another process type reported in the finding is existential clauses. Existential clauses employed in the reading texts of the selected English textbook underscore the safety concerns associated with social media usage and emphasizes the need for digital literacy and caution in sharing personal information online. This reflects an awareness of the potential risks inherent in digital interactions and the importance of mitigating them. In existential clauses, the existing thing can be concrete or abstract. The more abstract the thing, the higher level the discourse is (See Manar, 2022a). The use of abstract things represented in the existential clauses of English textbook can be claimed as a linguistic strategy in educational discourse for obtaining the educational purposes embedded in the book.

The last type of process reported in the finding section is behavioural clauses. The exploration of behavioural processes reveals a dominance of material-behavioural processes, indicating a focus on observable actions related to social media usage. This suggests an interest in understanding the practical implications of social media behaviour on individuals and society as a whole.

Overall, the findings of this research shed light on the multifaceted nature of social media discourse within English textbooks for twelfth-grade Indonesian students. By examining various process types through the transitivity system, the study provides valuable insights into the representation and implications of social media in the context of textbook usage.

Social media platforms have both positive and negative impacts. The positive impact is that it allows users to interact, share information, and build virtual communities. However, the negative impact can be the presence and increasing intensity of hatred and insecurity. As a social media user, an individual is expected to always be careful when sharing personal information and interacting with others. To reduce the negative impact of social media, there is a need for the government to establish better regulations for digital communities, such as digital literacy development.

4. CONCLUSION

This study entitled "The Representation of Social Media in English Textbook: A Hallidayan Perspective" delves into the portrayal of social media within English textbook designed for 12th-grade students in Indonesia. The research critically examines how a nationally issued textbook presents and contextualizes meaning towards social media. The findings of the study shed light on whether the textbook adequately address the diverse aspects of social media, including their positive contributions and potential pitfalls. Furthermore, it assesses whether the textbook equips students with the necessary skills to navigate the digital landscape responsibly. The present investigation plays an important role in understanding the quality of educational materials used for senior high school students, especially year-12 students. In particular, by portraying the representation of social media in the textbook, this research contributes valuable insights to educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers to enhance the quality of educational resources, fostering a more nuanced understanding of social media among Indonesian students.

Based on the findings of the present study, it can be inferred that the meaning towards social media is represented well in the textbook. This has been proved by the analysis on the transitivity system. The findings reported by the current paper are expected to provide educational and pedagogical inputs for better English material development. Despite its critical finding, the present analysis has only relied on a single course book as the data set. To gain more holistic knowledge about the researched issue, more data sources will be needed. Thus, further studies in the future can make use of more English textbooks as the data sources.

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