



## FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR EXERCISES IN A LOCAL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEXTBOOK IN INDONESIA: A CRITICAL DOCUMENT STUDY

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**Abstract:** Several studies have been conducted on English textbook, especially in examining the contextual meaning of a language (Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Widodo, 2015; Widodo, 2018; Xiong & Qiang, 2012). Moreover, there were less study that focused on addressing the functional grammar exercises in a local junior high school English textbook in Indonesia. This present study is designed for elucidating the most matter reason for implementing functional grammar exercises in local English textbooks especially for junior high school. Using critical document study (Hatch, 2002) and using transitivity analysis (Halliday, 1994). The result examined that the local English textbook only implemented the traditional grammar exercises in designing the grammar exercises. Moreover, this study suggested for the next study focus on examining classroom practices of traditional grammar exercises and functional grammar exercises.

**Keywords:** *critical document study, functional grammar exercises, systemic functional grammar, transitivity analysis*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

As an effect of the existence of communicative language teaching (CLT), the need for grammar teaching declined due to several specific reasons (Widodo, 2018). To begin with, learning English has to support students in communicative activities, such as speaking and writing. While this claim seems sensible, learning to speak and write involves a meaning-making process that requires functional grammar (spoken grammar and written grammar) (Widodo, 2006). The second reason is that teaching traditional grammar hinders interactive learning activities. Several studies had been done on the form of grammar teaching in the few last decades. there is a significant connection between the understanding of grammar and the other language skills that made grammar has been becoming an important substance for being taught for supporting the language learners' skills of the target language (Berry, 2014; Johnson & Linddon, 2016; Liu & Jiang, 2009; Liu, 2011; Richards & Reppen, 2014; Scheffler, 2013; Widodo, 2006). With this in mind, as the basic unit of a language, grammar has covered the pedagogical competence for supporting the language learner's competence, such as listening,

reading, speaking, and writing skills (Johnson & Liddon, 2016; Richards & Reppen, 2014; Widodo, 2006).

Becoming one of the most curricula artifacts, textbook plays the most important part in the teaching and learning activity, such as it will be useful for the language teacher as the management pattern of teaching and learning material both implementing in-class or out-class activities (Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Widodo, 2015). The existence of English grammar has predominance in the field of English language teaching (Borg & Burns, 2008; Richards & Reppen, 2014; Widodo, 2006). However, the challenge in teaching grammar is when the language learners are able to understand better on several grammar rules, but they are not able to use those grammatical rules for communicative purposes (Arikan, 2009; Widodo, 2006). Jones and Chen (2016) emphasized by understanding grammar, will be given a significant positive effect on other language skills. For example, in reading skill, grammar facilitates the language learner's ability to understand the meaning in both textual or spoken texts (Widodo, 2006). Therefore, English textbook is designed with such kinds of texts and many exercises to prepare the students to pass the test. Text is a part of the language itself (both in spoken and written forms) that is functional. It means that text is a useful tool for communication between the writer and readers in several contexts of the target language (Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Few prior studies had conducted by several researchers on the English textbook. To begin with, Harun et al. (2017) reported a study that focuses on exploring CBI's potential and depth understanding of both textual forms and semantic meaning of the L2 learners' language. They found there are several potential values of content-based instruction activity which able to increase the language learners' grammatical competence and knowledge according to the result of the pre-tests and post-tests, showed that 1) in general, the language learner performance improved in the grammar knowledge and how to use the language, 2) the language learner is able to construct the appropriate definitions for filling their lack of knowledge at the beginning of the study. Another study by Hu (2015) conducted a study on developing a framework that allows to investigate the indigenous language and the varieties of English. Findings presented that the Chinese academic texts exhibit a higher degree of technicality and compactness than their Singaporean counterpart.

However, there is less study on elucidating the most matter reason for implementing functional grammar exercises in local English textbooks, especially for junior high school. For fulfilling this need, the objective of the present study is revealing functional grammar content in grammar exercises of local English textbooks used in a junior high school in Indonesia. The functional grammar viewed a text as a substance and it also had a relation with the context function (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The following are questions that guide the present study, as follows:

1. Does the existing local EFL textbook contain functional grammar exercises?
2. How can functional grammar exercises matter to be implemented in the textbooks?

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1. Systemic Functional Grammar: The Implementation in a Curricula's Artifact**

Liu (2011) asserted the crucial need on enhancing the language teacher teaching grammar instruction in order to give help the language learner in building the critical thinking ability and the appropriate use of the grammatical rules. As a result of several debates, the

existence of the model in teaching grammar has significantly increased. According to the deductive teaching grammar model, the language teacher provided the grammatical rules including examples when the student is ordered to memorize them and followed by practicing the grammatical rules in another example (Widodo, 2006). The other model of teaching grammar has proposed by Liu and Jiang (2009), they divided the teaching grammar into three models, i.e. including discourse in teaching grammar, teaching model with the lexico-grammatical method, and the corpus teaching. Thus, in this current study, I focus to unearth which extent grammar exercises in local English textbooks are used in a junior high school in Indonesia.

Halliday (1978) proposed the theory of language as a social semiotic resource which examined the connection between text (language) and context of the language. Several studies on the field of grammar as a resource for meaning-making had been conducted during the last decades (Arikan, 2009; Bateman, 1989; Brickman, 1959; Cullen, 2008; Derewianka & Jones, 2010; Macken-Horarik, 2012; Ragan, 1989). The first level of the English language is the sentence level which is divided into grammar, vocabulary, and the practical context of the language used (Bateman, 1989; Ragan, 1989). Particularly, English grammar has been viewed as a tool for meaning-making. Grammar had become a crucial position such as becoming the systematic rules of the language and tools for representing how the native language used the target language in the real-life context situation (Arikan, 2009; Derewianka & Jones, 2010; Macken-Horarik, 2012).

Halliday (1994) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2004; 2014) proposed the concept of functional grammar, which viewed the grammar with a different lens. The functional grammar viewed a text as an artifact that provided the meaning-making recourse of the English language. The text had various meaningful functions, based on the context used in the language and it presented meaningful grammatical structures (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). According to these perspectives, the functional grammar gave more specific use of English, not only use it for communication purposes but also becoming a crucial source of meaning-making of the social practice of the target language. The concept of language is divided into several stages, as follows 1) becoming a text and system (grammar), 2) becoming sound, wording, and writing, 3) structure, and 4) as a resource (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). These are the starting point of what is functional grammar itself, and the first steps search how the language creates and able for expressing meaning.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This section provided an explanation of the research methodology applied in this present study. I conducted a critical document analysis (Hatch, 2002) and transitivity analysis (Halliday, 1994) especially in examining the local English textbook in Indonesia. Textbooks cover the crucial roles in classroom activities. The language teacher is able using textbook as the management pattern of teaching and learning material both implementing in-class or out-class activities (Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Widodo, 2015). For this study, the local English textbook being analyzed was Bahasa Inggris “When English Rings a Bell”, 2017 revision ed. This textbook was nationally used in junior high school in Indonesia and implemented in 2013 curricula.

However, for getting the specific data, I also used the common types of grammar exercises implemented in the textbook (Maijala & Tammenga-Helmantel, 2017), as follows:

1. Choose-the-correct-answer exercises
2. Fill-in-the-blank exercises
3. Written exercises
4. Communicative oral grammar exercises
5. Combining exercises
6. Grammar games
7. Translation exercises
8. Reflective/analytical exercises
9. Revision exercises

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings showed that textbook is commonly dominated by listening and speaking exercises. Therefore, there were only nine grammar exercises designed using the traditional grammar exercises  $n = 9$  (100 %) as portrayed in table 1:

**Table 1.** Percentage of English grammar exercises

Textbooks	Grammar Exercises	Total	Percentage
Bahasa Inggris “When English Rings a Bell”, 2017 revision ed.	Traditional Grammar Exercises	9	100%
	Functional Grammar Exercises	0	0%
Total Amount of Grammar Exercises		9	100 %

From the categories of grammar exercises found in the textbooks, the traditional English grammar exercises still dominated in the textbooks. The textbook only contained the traditional grammar exercises which means that the 2013 curricula still see a language only a tool for communication that builds up by several grammatical rules.

##### 4.1. Deconstruction of the Traditional Grammar Exercises into Functional Grammar Exercises

As seen in Fig. 1, the type of grammar exercise that commonly appear in any language textbook is a fill-in-the-blank exercise. This exercise provided 5 questions and it began with the example of how to finish the exercises in number 1. The grammar exercises in Fig. 1 are included in traditional grammar exercises because the exercise is focused on highlighting the grammatical roles. I analyzed the process of each sentence to reveal the possible changes in

order to include the contextual meaning of the target language or social practice in daily life situations.

1. Max is saying that his teacher has more books than him, and he has fewer books than his teacher.
2. Yuni is saying that usually there are \_\_\_\_\_ in the library in the morning, and there are \_\_\_\_\_ in the afternoon.
3. Zulfikar is saying that his father \_\_\_\_\_ his uncle, and his uncle \_\_\_\_\_ his father.
4. According to Ani, her bag \_\_\_\_\_ Andri's bag.
5. According to Agus, there is \_\_\_\_\_ in bread, and \_\_\_\_\_ in banana cake.

**Figure 1** Source: Bahasa Inggris: When English Rings a Bell, 2017 revision ed., p.134

For getting a deep analysis, I chose question number 3 for being analyzed and deconstructed using transitivity analysis and CDA (Halliday, 1994; Fairclough, 2001) to become functional grammar exercises. Here is the analysis of the questions after I break down them using transitivity analysis, as follows:

3. Zulfikar is saying that his father \_\_\_\_\_ his uncle, and his uncle \_\_\_\_\_ his father.

Zulfikar [P] is saying [Pro: Verbal] that his father [P] is older than [Circumstances] his uncle [P], and his uncle [P] is younger than [Circumstances] his father [P].

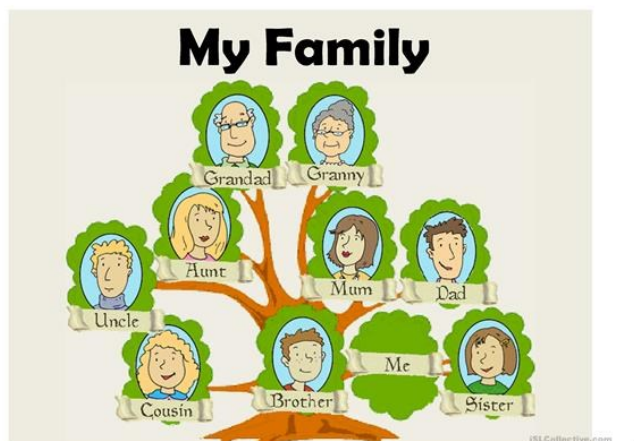
From the analysis using transitivity analysis, the questions are designed to check the language learner's understanding of the adjective words. However, for beginner English language learners, especially foreign language learners, this kind of question is hard for them because they don't have the way the target language is used practically, and sometimes the EFL learner is easier to learn a language that contains their cultural background in the language learning materials. Eggins (2004) emphasizes that based on their observation study on how people used language, he found in the natural setting the use of language, the language has a direct relationship to the context used the language in natural settings. The suggestion to revise in order to make the language learner easier to finish the exercises is by adding the contextual function in the questions, as follows:

Before revision:

3. Zulfikar is saying that his father \_\_\_\_\_ his uncle, and his uncle \_\_\_\_\_ his father.

After revision:

The importance of stimulus (e.g. visual artifacts, diagram, research result, etc.) in designing a question is to build the language learner's insight in understanding the target language material. The author of the English textbook or textbook developer must be recognized which section is important to add the stimulus. For example, in this exercise, I decided to add the family tree diagram in order to build the language insight into the use of adjectives, as follows:



(Source: <https://en.islcollective.com>)

According to the stimulus (i.e. family tree diagram), the author can be designed more variant of questions, for example from question number 3, it can become:

1. Zulfikar's father is (older / younger) than his uncle
2. Zulfikar's father is (older / younger) than his grandmother

The stimulus will be helpful for the foreign English language learner which had limited vocabulary in mind. This type of deconstruction was in line with Thompson's theory, Thompson (2014) defines functional grammar as the study of systematic grammatical rules that express the relationship with meaning.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

All in all, the importance of implementing functional grammar has been emphasized by several experts and practitioners. Halliday (1994) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2004; 2014) proposed the concept of functional grammar, which viewed the grammar with a different lens. The functional grammar viewed a text as an artifact that provided the meaning-making recourse of the English language. The text had various meaningful functions, based on the context used in the language and it presented meaningful grammatical structures (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). According to these perspectives, the functional grammar gave more specific use of English, not only use it for communication purposes but also becoming a crucial source of meaning-making related to social practice of target language. The concept of language is divided into several stages, as follows 1) becoming a text and system (grammar), 2) becoming sound, wording, and writing, 3) structure, and 4) as a resource (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The result examined that the current local English textbook only implemented the traditional grammar exercises in designing the grammar exercise. Moreover,

this study suggested for the next study focus on examining the significant difference in the implementation of traditional grammar and functional grammar in classroom practices.

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