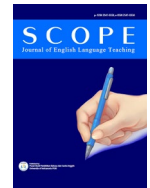




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An Empirical Research

Process Switching and Its Meaning towards Transgender Identity: An SFL Perspective

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KEYWORDS

process switching;
 transgender identity;
 SFL.

ABSTRACT

This SFL study attempts to scrutinise the process-type switching and its underlying meanings in the cyber-based interactive responses towards an issue of transgender. The issue is confined to the suspected genital reconstruction surgery of an Indonesian celebrity that becomes viral and triggers public debate on social media. 254 Indonesian clauses of interactive comments addressing the issue of transgender identity on a YouTube video of more than 2 million views were analysed. Prompting and replying responses were investigated for their categorization of process types by employing the tables of analysis adapted from the experiential meaning framework of Halliday and Matthiessen (2004). The analysis reveals some occurrences of process type switching in the interactive responses among responders in addressing the Indonesian sensitive and viral issue of transgender identity. In responding to the prompting comments, responders tended to employ relational and material clauses to establish values, evidences, and impacts in objective ways while they also used mental and verbal processes to affect one another in subjective ways. This Hallidayan study hints that the process switching among responders in addressing the issue of transgender is associated with the strategies for maintaining and spreading their ideology by confirming, strengthening, adding, and even arguing.

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INTRODUCTION

For the past decade, information and ideology have been disseminated and maintained not only by conventional media (with their rather authoritative and one-way communication), but also by cyber or online-based media which allow comments or responses from responders around the globe with no limit of time and border. The emergence of cyber application even provides circumstances for any parties regardless of authority to

disseminate ideas including fundamental beliefs. Herring (2015) claims that cyber-based media provide rich contexts where interactive verbal phenomena and the relationship between discourse and social practice can be investigated. The massive use of cyber media in the twenty first century has been underpinned by its principles of interactivity, demassification, asynchronous, and simultaneous (Herring in Saifullah, 2019).

One of the most current media with the characteristics of Herring's model of interactivity demassification,

asynchronous, and simultaneous refers to the YouTube channel. This mode of cyber-based communication and interaction allows cyber society to post and spread videos that can be openly commented on by cyber responders (Feng, Chen, and He, 2019) regardless of time and space borders. Khan (2017) reports in his study that responders in YouTube are able to engage in written conversation addressing the ads broadcasted via the YouTube channel. Users on YouTube also play roles not only as the consumers of the information brought by the video but also as responders that can comment on the posted videos (Walther, et. al., 2010).

Due to its functions and characteristics that meet the needs of the cyber generation, YouTube channel has gained popularity especially in 4.0 Society. It has been claimed to have achieved popularity par excellence among other similar online media in terms of digital contents (Díaz, et. al., 2019). To the present time, YouTube channel has been one of the biggest video paths of cyber society.

Until now, one of the hot issues discussed in YouTube comments has been attributed to sensitive phenomena. In Indonesia as the most populous Muslim country in the globe, one of sensitive and controversial topics of the cyber world is addressed to transgender identity. Transgenderism in the Online Cambridge Dictionary is associated with “the condition of someone feeling that they are not the same gender (=sex) as the one they had or were said to have at birth” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d., Transgenderism). The issue of transgender identity across the globe has been perceived, addressed, and responded distinctly according to religious and cultural beliefs. Even in Southeast Asia, the gradation of society perception towards transgender people varies.

In the country where ideology is governed and controlled by religious beliefs, transgender identity is seen as something against society. In Malaysia, to illustrate, transgender women (Mak Nyah) are addressed with stigmatism and persecution (Nemoto, et. al., 2018). They are also reported to be socially excluded in their societal life (Nuttbrock, 2018). In the survey study conducted by Nemoto, et. al. (2018), some terms that are associated with transgender women in Malaysia include persecuted, hostile, rude, animal, discriminated, disgusted, harassment, stigma, harm, barrier, mischaracterization, and so forth.

Nevertheless, in the country like Thailand where cultural beliefs and ideology have gradually shifted, transgender women known locally as Kathoey in some cases are accepted and supported either in family or society (Nuttbrock, 2018). This finding, however, is not in line with the study of Nemoto, et. al. (2018) where in some

cases transgender women in Thailand are often abused by family members especially fathers and brothers and discriminated in society.

In the context of Indonesia where religious beliefs generally underpin people’s paradigm towards sensitive phenomena, the issue of transgender identity is commonly addressed negatively. This especially occurs in the case of genital reconstruction surgery considered as fatal misconduct against the religion. Against the religion in the Indonesian context can mean against the society regardless of whether the case is personal or communal.

One of the most current issues of transgenic genital reconstruction surgery is suspected to have involved an Indonesian celebrity labelled as celebrity X. His video of suspected post-event of transgender genital surgery has been viral on cyber social media especially on YouTube channel. The singer has massively been suspected and judged to have undergone gender reconstruction surgeries from male to female. This most recent issue of celebrity X has invited public chaos and debate on the cyber world especially on YouTube. This written public chaos and debate are realized in the forms of war of comments posted on the comments platform of YouTube Channel. The comments are majorly manifested in clauses.

The clauses employed between comments reflect the switches of processes. Process switching in the current study is associated with the changes of process types in the cyber interactive responses especially between prompting (responded) and replying (responding) comments. In the linguistic field, the term of ‘process’ was initiated by Michael Halliday in 1960s based on his Systemic Functional Linguistic framework. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) point out that a process plays a fundamental role in representing all experiences contextually in a form of clause (clause as representation’ of the world).

Within the SFL framework, a process embedded with its participants and accompanied with circumstances is termed the system of transitivity. The transitivity system represents how ideational or experiential meaning is realized by means of the choices of process, participants, and circumstances (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). As its origin, “the system of transitivity construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types” (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004:170).

All types of processes are symbolized through clauses along with embedded participants (animate and inanimate), various attributes, and circumstances attached to the process (Martin, et. al., 1997). The scheme of the

transitivity system with its elements is reiterated by Martin, et. al. (1997) in a diagram as follows.

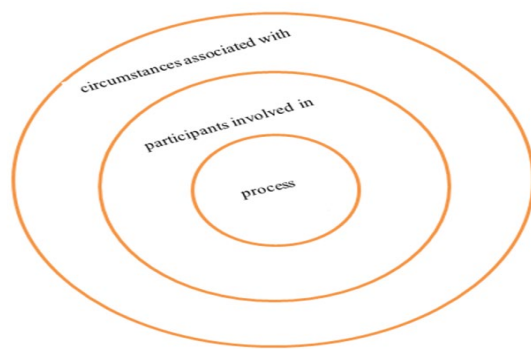


Figure 1. The Structure of Transitivity Structure

The transitivity system classifies the processes into outer experiences epitomized by the material process (doing or happening); inner experiences represented as mental processes (thinking and feeling); attribution or identification represented as the relational process (being and having); human verbal activities termed verbal process (saying); the existence of something known as existential process (existing); and mental activities reflected in noticeably physical reactions termed behavioural process (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). As the representation of humans' experiences, the system of transitivity in clauses plays a role in achieving certain goals including ideologies. This also applies to the discourse of media as reported by the studies of Ahangar (2014), Al Fajri (2018), Manar (2016), Matu (2008), Seo (2013), Shokouhi and Amin (2010) and Yaghoobi (2009).

Those aforementioned studies have revealed that the analysis of process types in the language of media depicts how a similar issue or information can be represented by different media in distinct ways. Manar's study (2016) on the headlines produced by two media with contradictory political ideologies has reported that the transitivity system of opposition media tends to position its target as the second participant indicating less power. In its pro-government media counterpart, the processes are inclined to position the target as the first participant reflecting more power.

To the present time, most SFL studies on media have tended to focus on the process distribution and roles of participants inside the process. Studies of Systemic Functional Linguistics so far have not explained the transformation of processes in maintaining and spreading beliefs in the cyber-based interactive media. Thus, there has been a need for understanding how the transitivity system is switched from a particular process type to another.

Another reason behind the present study is addressed to the YouTube channel as one of the most popular multimodal online platforms across the globe. It has been one of the biggest video paths among other cyber media. As elaborated before, this media has the characteristics of interactivity, demassification, asynchronous, and simultaneous.

The third motivation of this study is related to the issue of transgender identity especially genital reconstruction surgery that has triggered public chaos and debate in Indonesian cyber society. Further, critical SFL studies on gender identity so far have limited their foci on the bias representation between male and female. There has been the lack of insight into the representation of the sensitive issue like transgender identity.

The present study attempts to depict the process type switches in the written comments about the issue of transgender identity in the interactive cyber media. It specifically reveals how the material and relational clauses in the prompting responses are responded by other responders in the replying comments. Prompting comments are limited to material and relational processes since both types of processes dominantly surpass other types of processes. To obtain the purpose of study, one research question has been formulated: how is the issue of transgender identity on the prompting and replying responses of YouTube comments is represented with the transitivity system?

METHOD

The research design adopted in this present study referred to the content analysis investigating the switches of processes in YouTube prompting and replying comments addressing the issue of transgender identity. The content analysis in this study was associated with a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use (Krippendorff, 2004). It is claimed as the tool applicable for all context and various social disciplines in analysing the message of texts scientifically (Neuendorf, 2002).

For the research framework, this study adopts Systemic Functional Linguistics proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) especially the system of transitivity. The data sources in the current study were in the form of interactive written comments posted on YouTube. The channel broadcasts a post-event of suspected genital reconstruction surgery involving an Indonesian celebrity. The title of the video was (NO SENSOR) VIDEO OPERASI GANTI KELAMIN 'X' [(NO SENSOR) THE VIDEO OF TRANSGENDER GENITAL

RECONSTRUCTION SURGERY OF 'X'. It was posted on the YouTube channel by Rendi (2018). The data were retrieved in 24 September 2019 thus any occurrences of data source changes after that time such as addition, edition, or omission of comments were beyond the limit of this study. The selection on the video and its comments was due to its highest numbers of viewers surpassing 2 millions of views.

Further, 570 comments in Indonesian towards a YouTube video of more than 2 million views were studied but only 144 comments were analysed as the data sources. 426 comments received no feedback responses from responders. The total 144 interactively prompting and replying comments were analysed into 255 ranking clauses. A ranking clause was associated with the clause that brings the main process. On the other hand, an embedded or rank-shifted clause refers to the constituents of the main clause (Gerrot and Wignell, 1994) such as qualifiers.

The data in this SFL study were scrutinised from the bottom up (Swales as cited in Charles, Pecorari, and Hunston, 2009) where linguistic features were analysed by employing the transitivity table adapted from Halliday and Matthiessen (2004). The process of data analysis was epitomised in the following table.

Table 1. The Classification of Process Types between Prompting and Replying Comments

	Responders	Comments	Processes	Frequency	Total
Prompting Comment	D				
Replying Comments	D1				
	D2				

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study aims at revealing the switches of processes between prompting and responding responses to the issue of transgender identity on YouTube comments. By employing Hallidayan framework of transitivity system, this study investigates cyber-based interactive responses towards the Indonesian sensitive issue of transgender identity. Below the types of clauses between both types of comments are portrayed.

Table 2. Process Types in Prompting and Responding Comments

As portrayed in the table above, the prompting comments

Replying Comments Prompting comments	Relational	Material	Mental	Verbal	Existential	Behavioural	Total
Relational	62%	22%	12%	3%	1%	0%	100%
Material	45.8%	45.8%	4.17%	4.17%	0%	0%	100%
Relational & Material	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

(relational, material, and the combination of both) on the vertical column are responded by various process types on the horizontal rows. Based on the table, three patterns of process switching are successfully mapped. The first pattern refers to the relational process in the prompting comments and other types of processes in the replying comments. Relational processes in the prompting comments addressing the suspected issue of transgender identity are replied with all types of processes except the behavioural process. From the highest to the lowest, the replying comments for relational clauses encompass relational (62%), material (22%), mental (12%), verbal (3%), and existential clauses (1%).

Relational processes in the replying comments outnumber other types of processes while the occurrences of material processes are around a third of the former. Mental processes in the replying comments appear around a half of occurrences of material processes. Verbal and existential processes are found in least numbers of frequencies while behavioural processes are absent. The process types as responses to the relational processes in the prompting comments are exemplified below.

The second pattern of process switching found in the current study lies between material process in the prompting comments and some types of processes in the replying comments. Material processes in the prompting comments addressing the suspected issue of transgender identity are replied with all types of processes except the behavioural and existential processes. From the highest to the lowest, replying comments encompass material and relational (45.83% for each) as well as mental and verbal (4.7 % for each). Relational and material processes in the replying comments outnumber other types of processes while mental and verbal processes in the responding comments occur with the same rate in a very least number. Some extracts of the four process types as responses to the material processes in the prompting comments are exemplified in the following table.

Table 3. Responses to Relational Clauses

Responders	Responded Comments	Process
D	<u>gini Ciri Ciri Orang Ga Bersyukur</u> :v [this is the trait of an ungrateful guy :v]	relational
	Responding Comments	
D2	yang penting <u>kita</u> sudah bersyukur <u>atas semua yang telah diberikan maha kuasa kepada kita</u> [the important thing is that we are already grateful for all that has been given to us by the almighty god]	mental
D4	<u>Dia itu gay</u> [He is gay]	relational
D10	(Auto) <u>masuk neraka</u> [Automatically he will go the hell]	material

Table 4. Responses to Material Clauses

Responders	Responded Comments	Process
C	<u>Siapa yg jijk 'X' like</u> [Those who feels disgusted at 'X' click the like button]	material
	Responding Comments	
C5	Semoga <u>'X' ke neraka</u> [Hope that 'X' goes to the hell]	material
C7	iya ternyata <u>'X' bencong Thailand</u> [apparently 'X' is a Thai sissy]	relational
C11	Jijik <u>gw</u> [I feel disgusted at him]	relational
C14	Tapi <u>kita jangan hina dia</u> [But we should not insult him]	verbal

The last noticeable pattern of process switching in the data set of the current study is between the combination of relational and material clauses in the prompting comments and other types of processes in the replying comments. When both material and relational processes are employed in the prompting comments addressing the issue of transgender identity, they are inclined to be responded by the similar types of processes especially material processes. Material processes found in the replying comments towards material and relational clauses reach 75% while their relational counterparts garner only 25%. The margin between the occurrences of these two types of processes is quite significant reaching 50%. Compared with relational processes, material processes tend to significantly contribute to the responded comments expressed in the form of material and relational clauses. In addition, none of mental, verbal, existential, and

behavioural clauses are identified in the responding responses. Their contribution is the lowest in addressing the material and relational clauses of prompting comments.

What can be noticed here is that when the combination of material and relational clauses is employed in the prompting comments, they are inclined to be responded with the similar types of processes especially material processes as illustrated below.

Table 5. Responses to Material and Relational Clauses

Responders	Responded Comments	Process
AA	Klo <u>dia punya totonk</u> // <u>di ganti</u> // trus klo <u>dia mo pipis</u> (gmn tuh) // // kan <u>totonk nya dia ud di buang/ copot</u> 🤔🤔 [If he has a cock// is replaced// then how if he wants to pee (how)// since his cock has been cut off]	relational; material; material; material
	Responding Comments	
AA1	Kan <u>totong nya udah di ganti</u> jadi <u>titing</u> . // Kalo <u>mau pipis</u> // ya <u>tinggal pipis</u> , // <u>gak masalah</u> . [His cock has been transformed into vagina.// If he wants to pee// he can do that right away ,// that's not a problem.]	material; material; material; relational

Until this point, in general, when prompting comments addressing the issue of transgender identity in cyber social platforms are expressed in the form of material or relational processes, their responses are also inclined to be dominantly represented with the same types of processes. Further, in responding to the material or relational processes of prompting comments, both mental and verbal processes occupy the third or fourth position. Nevertheless, due to limited data sources as well as the low occurrences of both, any inference is not easy to emphasise. What can be noticed is that in responding to material or relational processes, either mental or verbal processes can place the third or fourth position in terms of their contribution. Related with behavioural and existential processes, what can be pointed out is that the contribution of each in responding to the material or relational processes ranges from fifth or sixth position.

Overall, the findings of the current study scrutinising the phenomena of process switching in the cyber-based

interactive responses towards a suspected issue of transgender genital reconstruction surgery reveal three patterns. The first pattern refers to the relational processes in the prompting comments and other types of processes in the replying comments (except behavioural process). The second one is the switch from material processes in the prompting responses to relational, material, mental, and verbal processes in the replying responses. The last pattern refers to relational-material clauses in the prompting comments and the same types of processes in the replying comments.

As revealed earlier in the findings, the first process switch occurs between relational processes in the prompting comments and five types of processes (relational, material, mental, verbal, and existential) in the replying comments. Relational processes in both prompting and replying responses are overall employed by responders to attack celebrity X by addressing negative attribution to him or to question the reliability of the video by describing its quality. The dominant use of relational processes in both responded and responding comments is pertinent with responders' inclination to give values to celebrity X or the video.

As reported by Kondowe (2014) in his transitivity study, relational clauses are dominantly employed to solidify and strengthen 'image' or values. Shokouhi and Amin (2010) in their comparative transitivity study on the language of media also show that relational processes in media are inclined to be employed to establish either positive or negative image to the participants being discussed. Further, based on the transitivity study of language in media (Al Fajri, 2018), it is found that relational processes are inclined to be used by in-group party to create positive attributes to the participants of their sides.

Apart from relational processes in the replying comments, material processes are also employed dominantly to respond to the relational processes in the prompting comments. Whereas relational processes in the replying comments are mainly adopted by responders to maintain or confirm what previous responders has characterised towards celebrity X and the video truthfulness, material processes are generally employed to give effect in the form of actions as well as evidences. They strengthen the values in the relational processes of prompting comments. As proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004:170) a material process can "construe the procedure as a sequence of concrete changes...".

Under the present study, relational and material processes are frequently employed in the replying comments due to their functions to reveal the truth as well as to describe how

they give values to the truth. For comparison, from the perspective of the scientific genre where truth is also emphasised, material and relational clauses become the dominant clauses among all types of clauses (Choura, 2013; Huang, 2009; Kazemian, Behnam, and Ghafoori, 2013; Martínez, 2001; Shahab and Asl, 2015; Sucipto, Mahdi, and Sujatna, 2014; Zheng, Yang, and Ge, 2014).

Different from the frequent relational and material processes in the replying comments, mental (third position) and verbal (fourth position) processes are used by responders not only to address celebrity X and the video but also to focus on the interaction with other responders. Some responders in the replying comments adopt mental and verbal processes to argue, to target another responder, and to affect other responders in discussing the issue of transgender genital reconstruction surgery. This phenomenon is in line with the function of mental and verbal processes to pose experience by involving interpersonal strategies. The transitivity study of Martínez (2001) on research articles points out that mental and verbal processes are frequently employed to establish interpersonal connection or to persuade readers. Kondowe (2014) in his transitivity study of presidential speech reports that verbal clauses are employed to emphasise commitment and strengthen proposition.

However, the function of verbal processes in the findings of the current study in general shows distinct tendency compared with the function of verbal processes in the transitivity study of conventional media. Verbal processes in addressing the issue of transgender identity in the cyber media tend to create interaction that focuses more on the target. In the study of conventional media conducted by Chen (2005), verbal processes tend to portray the sources of information by focusing more on the verbiage. Verbal processes in the conventional media can be used to establish information reliability by citing information resources with reporting or reported verbs. Further, the least process type in the replying comments, the existential process, is used by a responder to point out the evidence about the existence of things previously stated in the relational process of prompting comments.

Until this point, the switches of relational process in prompting comments to relational, material, mental, verbal, and existential processes of replying comments hint that responders do not only represent evidences, effects, and values to address the Indonesian sensitive issue of transgender identity. They also employ them especially verbal and mental clauses to affect one another. This implies that whereas both material and relational processes can be used to strengthen ideology in an objective ways,

mental and verbal ones can be employed to support the ideology in subjective ways.

The second pattern found in the findings of this study exists between material processes in the prompting comments and four types of processes (relational, material, mental, and verbal) in the replying comments. Different from the first pattern, in this pattern, the occurrences of material processes in the replying comments are in balance with the relational processes. Relational processes by nature is more indirect and implicit in construing experiences while material processes as the process of action, goings-on, or happening pose and establish more strong experiential meaning. Both types of processes play complementary roles.

Other limited numbers of processes, namely mental and verbal processes are still employed to focus on the issue of transgender identity by involving other responders interpersonally. Again, whereas relational and material processes in the replying comments focus more on discussing celebrity X and the reliability of the video in objective ways, the mental and verbal processes in the replying comments still lay their emphasis in subjective and interpersonal involvement. Martínez (2001) reveals that material and relational clauses are dominantly used to create objective meaning making while verbal and mental are frequently employed to persuade readers.

The last pattern in the findings of this SFL-based study lies in the combination of material and relational clauses in the prompting comments addressing the suspected issue of transgenic surgery. All replying comments are expressed in material only, relational only or the combination of both. Other types of processes are absent from the findings. When relational and material processes are used simultaneously in the prompting comments, only the similar types of processes are employed in the replying ones. Based on their origins, both material and relational processes are the most objective strategies in construing experiences among all types of processes. A material process plays a role in delineating events while a relational process serves to create a value. Eggins (2004) points out that a material process brings tangible and believable messages while Reath (1998) states that with relational clauses people can influence the perspectives of others.

Since the combination of material and relational clauses can facilitate the truth or fact creation with their complementary functions, responders might not need other process types to maintain and spread their ideologies. Another noted point is that in responding to the combination of relational and material clauses, the occurrences of material processes in the replying comments are three times of the relational processes. This

implies that when prompting comments focus on values and evidences in the form of action, responders tend to put their emphasis on the action rather than on the values.

In conclusion, findings of this study in general have revealed that the occurrence of process switches in addressing the Indonesian sensitive issue of transgender identity is due to the need of responders to maintain and spread their religious and cultural ideologies either by confirming, supporting, adding, or arguing. In addressing the Indonesian sensitive issue of transgender identity, responders are inclined to confirm and establish values by employing relational processes (process of relating) and they tend to pose evidences or impacts by employing material processes (the process of doing/action). Besides, they also engage in involving interpersonal or subjective strategies in addressing the issue by employing either mental or verbal processes

CONCLUSION

The present analysis of process switching in the interactive cyber-based conversation addressing the suspected issue of transgender genital reconstruction surgery has given the insight into how responders functionally reply the prompting comments by employing similar or different types of processes. Responders in the replying comments tend to employ relational processes to confirm what responders in the prompting comments have stated. Responders also show evidences and future impact of actions by adopting material processes. Additionally, responders of the replying comments also put their emphasis on interpersonal strategies in arguing with other responders by employing verbal and mental clauses. Other types of processes such as existential and behavioural in the data set are in very least or even absent occurrences. This is possibly due to their limitation to establish reliable values, evidences, and impacts. So far, in general, the occurrences of process type switching in the findings of this study can be associated with responders' needs to maintain and spread their strong beliefs towards the issue of transgender identity by confirming, strengthening, adding, and arguing.

The insight into the process switching in maintaining and spreading ideology towards the issue of transgender identity contributes new knowledge either to functional linguistic fields on cyber media discourse or on sociology discourse. The findings of the current study can also contribute to the language teaching and learning field, that is, by assisting language learners how to make meaning critically and functionally (especially writing) with predetermined purposes in mind. This SFL-based study has attempted to have a clear insight into the tendency of process switching towards the sensitive issue of

transgender identity on the interactive cyber media. For further studies, a larger data set is possibly needed. Further studies can also investigate the process switching in other platforms of cyber media that may have their own distinct characteristics.

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