

Relational Process Clauses in the Students' Descriptive Essays

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ABSTRACT

This study revealed the result of the analysis of the relational process clauses found on the students' descriptive essays at the CCU course. The study is aimed at scrutinizing the clauses of the relational process with their roles and lexical verbs realizing the relational process. The data analyzed for the accountable study were 21 descriptive essays. The method applied for the study was the descriptive qualitative one and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) was used as the framework in analyzing the data. The study exposed 5 different roles of clauses as a result. The roles are *properties or characteristics* with the first place following *definition, classification, composition, and function* ones in a consecutive way. The study result also acknowledged that relational process clauses are mostly used for describing Properties. This role was realized by two types of relational process clauses –intensive and possessive relational process clauses operating on attributive relational process. However, the relational process occurring in possessive relational process clause was only realized by a single verb *have*. This indicates that the students have a limited linguistic knowledge which implicates on improving students' writing descriptive skills.

Keywords: relational process clause, descriptive writing, essays, Systemic Functional Linguistics, CCU

INTRODUCTION

A descriptive essay is a kind of essay functioning to describe person, place, or thing. This type of essay has some significant lexicogrammatical features focusing on specific Participants and the use of Attributive and Identifying Processes (Gerot & Wignell, 1994). The clause in which Attributive and Identifying Processes commonly operate is called relational process clauses classified as Intensive, Possessive, and Circumstantial clauses (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). These clauses play significant roles in descriptive texts, such as, Definition, Classification, Composition, Function, Properties (Martin, 1993b), and Structure (Khorina, 2018). This paper concerns with what roles of relational process clauses applied by the students of English Department when they are asked to write an essay.

To our knowledge, no study has yielded on the application of relational process clauses in students' descriptive writing. A study of descriptive essays produced by tenth graduate highschool students focused on transitivity system consisting of all types of

process without considering the roles assigned by the process (Rohmat et al., 2018). Whereas, another study related to descriptive essays investigated cohesive devices which does not belong to transitivity system (Rahman, 2013). Besides, there is also a study dealing with descriptive texts of eighth grade students which only focus on the mastery of writing descriptive essays (Suci et al., 2019). Other study conducted on descriptive writing analyzed the errors committed by the eighth grade of junior highschool students (Effendy, 2014). And there is also a study employing SFL to find out the problems encountered by students in writing descriptive texts (Noprianto, 2017). Hence, a study focusing on the application of relational process clauses in students' descriptive essays has not been done yet. This present study is analyzing relational process clauses used by the students in their descriptive essays. In addition, this study also investigates the roles of relational process clauses implemented in the descriptive essays. Thus, this paper is aimed at answering the following questions.

1. What roles do occur in the students' descriptive essays?
2. What is the most frequent role in the students' descriptive essays?
3. What kinds of lexical verbs are mostly used in the most frequent role?

The study is reliable for those who have great interests in enhancing their knowledge and skills of applying relational process clauses in written forms. Students at Politeknik Negeri Bandung, for example, presumably have opportunities to apply the study in a quite number of subjects, such as text editing, extensive reading, writing skills, presentation skills, and grammar. The study can also offer the students lexical perspectives when they are forced to exert their vocabulary knowledge. Teachers of English are no doubt to execute the study as a medium to analyse functional grammar in their students' essays. Others are likely to commit the study as a thought to easily frame essays.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Descriptive Essay

A descriptive essay refers to a kind of essay which is characterized by the present of specific Participants and the use of Attributive and Identifying relational process

(Gerot & Wignell, 1994). In certain types of text, Attributive and identifying relational process play specific roles to describe Definition, Classification, Function, Composition, and Properties (Martin, 1993a); (Khorina et al., 2017), and Structure (Khorina, 2018).

The Function of Relational Process

Relational process is a type of primary process in Transitivity system serving to characterize or to identify (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). These two functions subdivide relational process into two types: Attributive and Identifying relational process. Attributive type relates the participants known as Carrier and Attribute through characterizing. Attribute is assigned to characterize Carrier. Meanwhile, identifying relational process links the participants called Token and Value through identifying. Both of the relational process types are exemplified by Fontaine (2012) as followed.

- 1) John is nice.
- 2) John is the lawyer.

Clauses 1) and 2) have relational process realized by the same verb – *is*. However, the relational processes serve different function. In 1), the process belongs to attributive relational process while in 2) it is classified as identifying relational one. The differences is laid on the participants' structure as seen in the table of analysis below.

Table 1. Attributive relational process

Carrier	Process: attributive	Attribute
<i>John</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>nice</i>
Nominal group	Verbal group	Nominal group

Table 1 shows that Attribute is realized by nominal group *nice* which is an adjective. The adjective characterizes the other participant called Carrier. Therefore, the participant is labeled Attribute since its function is to attribute another participant in the clause which possesses the attribute. This participant is labeled Carrier. Whereas, Table 2 indicates that one participant is realized by nominal group *the lawyer* consisting of definite article *the* as Deictic and common noun *lawyer* as Thing. The definite article

makes the Thing definite as it is used to identify another participant. Hence the participant is labeled Value which owned by another participant called Token.

Table 2. Identifying relational process

Token	Process: identifying	Value
<i>John</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>the lawyer</i>
Nominal group	Verbal group	Nominal group

Roles of Relational Process Clause

Relational process operates on three types of relational process clause called intensive, possessive, and circumstantial (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). The clauses may serve several roles: Definition, Classification, Function, Composition, Properties (Martin, 1993a), and Structure (Khorina, 2018). Below is the clauses which realize the roles exemplified by (Khorina et al., 2017) found in Electronic Engineering Texts.

- 3) *Fuses are the weak link in a circuit.*
- 4) *Inductors may be fixed or variable*
- 5) *Important op amp circuits include integrators and differentiators.*
- 6) *The rheostat also acts as a dropping resistor.*
- 7) *Optocouplers are used to electrically isolate circuits.*
- 8) *The current i comprises three components.*
- 9) *Polyester capacitors are light in weight and stable.*
- 10) *A rectifier has a low impedance.*

Definition is commonly realized by an intensive clause working on identifying relational process as in 3) while Classification may be realized either by intensive clause or possessive both of which operate on attributive relational process as in 4) and 5). Function may be used by both intensive and circumstantial relational process clauses as in 6) and 7). Whereas, Composition is realized by possessive relational clause as in 8). And Properties like Classification, may also be realized either by intensive or possessive relational process clause as exemplified in 9) and 10). To sum up, relational process occurring in relational process does not only serve to characterize and identify but also tend to play specific roles in certain types of texts.

METHOD

Qualitative method analysis was used as the study design. The study was conducted at the English study program of Politeknik Negeri Bandung (Polban), Bandung, Indonesia consisting 21 students as the participants. The students were asked to write a 300 word essay concerning an aspect of the culture of a country as the source of the data of the study. Then, the data adhering the relational clauses at the essays were identified. Next, all the relational clauses were analyzed in conjunction with their roles which are definition, function, classification, composition, and properties. The last, all clauses with specific roles are recorded in a table labeled in order to easily invigilate all verbs used to show their roles as illustrated in Figure 1.

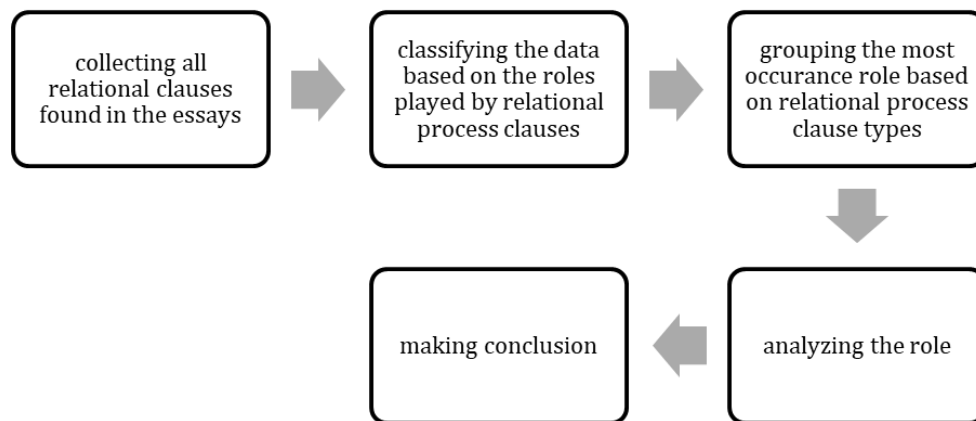


Figure 1. Stages of Data Analysis

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data show that all the students' essays were descriptive characterized by the presence of specific Participants of Attributive and Identifying relational process as stated by Gerot & Wignell (1994). Furthermore, Figure 2 shows that all the students' essays employed the five roles of relational process clauses as listed by Martin et al. (1993). The roles of relational process clauses are Definition, Classification, Function, Composition, and Properties. However, among the roles, Properties has the most frequently occurrences followed other four roles.

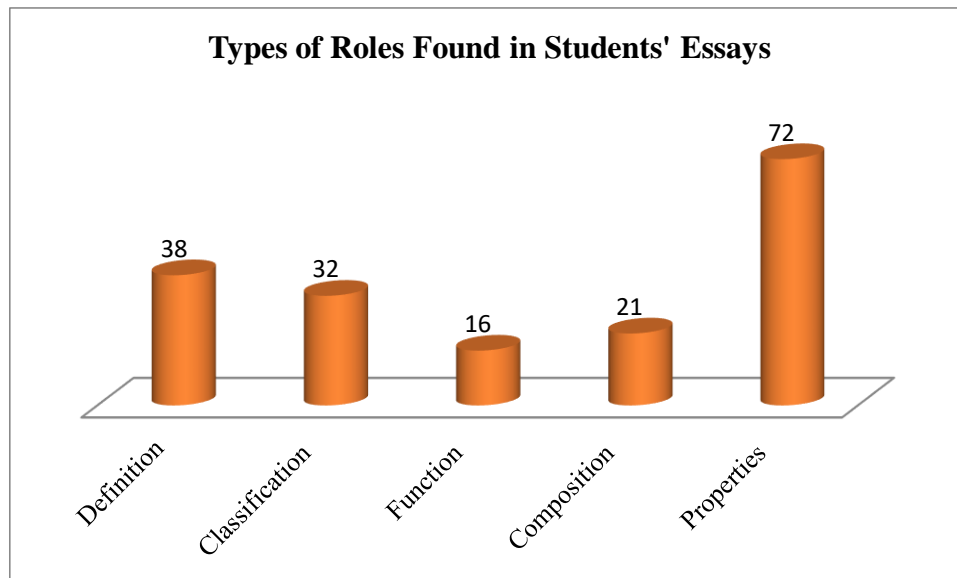


Figure 2. Types of Roles Found in the Students' Essays

Besides, two common lexical verbs *be* and *have* appear to realize relational process in the clauses serving as Properties as shown in Figure 3. Accordingly, the role of Properties is realized not only by intensive relational process clauses but also by possessive relational process one.

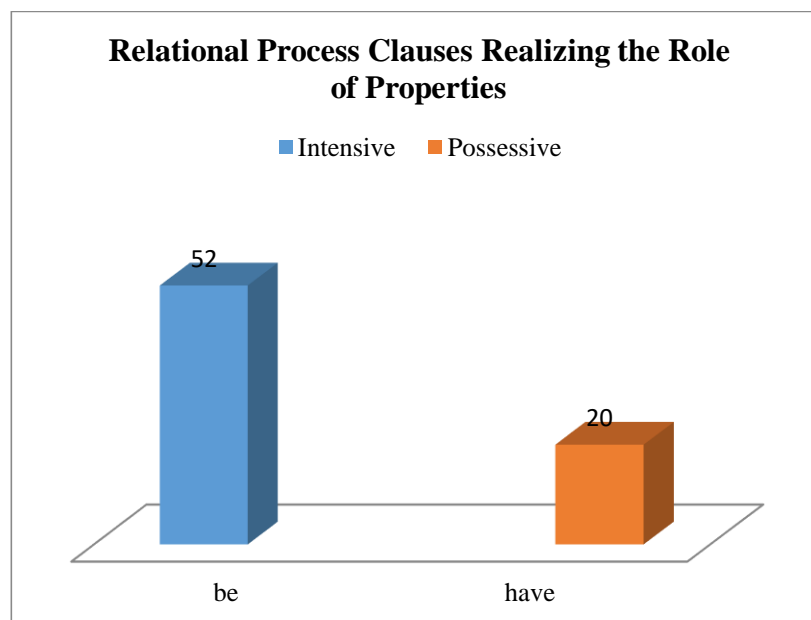


Figure 3. Verbs in Roles of Properties

Discussion

Figures 2 and 3 show all roles of relational process clauses and kinds of verbs frequently were used by students in their descriptive essays. However, properties tend to occur dominantly. The role was realized by two kinds of relational process clauses—intensive and possessive relational process clauses. Both of them are discussed below.

Properties: Intensive clause

The data show that there are two types of clauses realizing the role of Properties – intensive and possessive relational process clauses. The former appears to be higher than the second one; however, both tend to have attributive relational process dominantly realized by single verb *be* and *have*. Some instances are discussed below.

1. *The building is cylindrical and open above.*
2. *marriage rates are high.*
3. *the people are very friendly and helpful*
4. *Malaysia is unique.*
5. *Australians are very casual, easygoing, and familiar.*

All the clauses above play the role of Properties which are realized by intensive relational process clauses operating on attributive relational process. The process is realized by verb *be* while Carrier is realized by nominal group and Attribute assigned as the characteristic possessed by Carrier is realized by adjective labeled as nominal group by SFL. The elaboration of the clauses is seen clearly in the table below.

Table 3. Properties Realized by Intensive Clauses

Carrier	Process: attributive	Attribute
<i>The building</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>cylindrical and open above</i>
<i>Marriage rates</i>	<i>are</i>	<i>high</i>
<i>The people</i>	<i>are</i>	<i>very friendly and helpful</i>
<i>Malaysia</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>unique.</i>
<i>Australians</i>	<i>are</i>	<i>very casual, easy going, and familiar</i>
Nominal group	Verbal group	Nominal group

Properties: Possessive clause

As mentioned before that Properties may also be realized by possessive relational process clause as found in the data. The clauses operate solely on attributive relational process realized by single verb *be*. Some clauses are taken below to sample the data.

6. *India has a unique communication style.*
7. *Vietnam has a very rich culture.*
8. *Australia has a diverse religious society*
9. *Skilt has different motif for different family.*
10. *Every country has their own habits.*

Possessive relational process clauses are characterized by the verbs realizing the relational process. One of the verbs is *have* as found in the clauses above. Since the clauses operate on attributive relational process, the participants involved are labeled as Carrier and Attribute. Carrier is realized by nominal groups and so Attribute. However, the nominal groups realizing Attribute consist of Thing and Modifier instead of adjective like in intensive clauses. It can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Properties realized by possessive clause

Carrier	Process: attributive	Attribute
<i>India</i>	<i>has</i>	<i>a unique communication style</i>
<i>Vietnam</i>	<i>has</i>	<i>a very rich culture.</i>
<i>Australia</i>	<i>has</i>	<i>a diverse religious society</i>
<i>Skilt</i>	<i>has</i>	<i>different motif for different family.</i>
<i>Every country</i>	<i>has</i>	<i>their own habits</i>
Nominal groups	Verbal group	Nominal group

CONCLUSION

In writing descriptive essays, the students of English Department of Polban could apply the relational process as the main characteristic of descriptive text (Gerot & Wignell, 1994). The relational process clauses in which relational process operates play some specific roles listed by (Martin, 1993b; Khorina et al., 2017). Evidence from the data presented in the Results show that all the roles are used in the essays. However, the

most frequent use of the role is Properties realized by two types of relational process clauses: intensive and possessive relational process clauses operating solely on attributive relational process. Unfortunately, the attributive relational process is only realized by two verbs *be* and *have*. In other words, the role of Properties is realized by limited choices of verbs. To improve the writing ability of students in writing descriptive texts or essays, it is critical to introduce more various of verbs realizing relational process as identified by Khorina, et al (2017).

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