



Reconstructing Grammar Exercises: A Systemic Functional Grammar Approach

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Abstract: Despite the sufficient amount of language textbook analysis studies that have been conducted, little attention focused on grammar exercises analysis presented in the Indonesian junior high school English textbooks that facilitated the students to make meaning where functional grammar principles were adopted. This current study nuanced education artifacts analysis. The researchers intended to reveal to what extent the English grammar exercises present functional grammar exercises. Moreover, The study provided a practical suggestion to teachers, textbook developers, and language practitioners to revise and include the functional grammar approach in designing English grammar exercises. Anchored into critical document study, this study focused to find the representation of functional grammar exercises portrayed in an English language textbook where the mandated English language curriculum endorses genre-based and text-based language pedagogy in an Indonesian secondary school context. Two analytical tools were combined (i.e. transitivity analysis and critical discourse study) to reveal the existing English grammar exercises. The findings present a total of 88 English grammar exercises found in the textbook. However, 28 English grammar exercises indicated activities for the student to make meaning. The result provided a critical suggestion for grammar exercises revision that facilitates students to make meaning and understanding the social practices of the language. However, this study only provided a textbook analysis, further studies possibly focus on action studies where the functional grammar exercises were implemented in classroom activities.

INTRODUCTION

In learning English as a foreign language, grammar has a crucial position as the basic learning materials. Maijala and Helmantel (2017), Renandya and Widodo (2016), and Richards and Reppen (2014) documented that grammar roles in the language-learning process become supporting elements that help to learn the language skills, such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The challenge of teaching grammar is to give a practical understanding for the students to use

grammar in social practices (Başöz, 2014). Thus, it needs to enhance the interest of doing study in the e grammar of language sector.

In the teaching language field, the existence of communicative language teaching (CLT) provides a bad impact on grammar teaching improvement (Boroujeni & Fard, 2013; Farooq, 2015). There are several reasons related to this case. The first, learning the English language engaged students in communicative interactions, both spoken

and written (Adem & Berkessa, 2022; Widodo, 2015). In response to this, learning speaking and writing provides activities to make meaning that functional grammar principles are included. The second, the traditional grammar teaching approach does not give interactive classroom activities, for example, teaching grammar activities focused on providing activities to finish several grammar exercises (Adem & Berkessa, 2022; Widodo, 2015).

Understanding language using social semiotics lenses provided critical insights that language builds more than just a set of rules, it gives insight into the social practices of language (Almujaiwel, 2018; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Lee, 2014; Sandoval, 2020; Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Zhang et al., 2022). The theory of language as a social semiotics proposed by Halliday (1978) examines the connection between language (text) and the context (social practices). This study is designed to examine the existing grammar exercises in the English textbook for Indonesian junior high schools. In the field of English teaching and learning activities, textbook plays a crucial role in supporting teaching and learning activities. The teacher is able to use the textbook as the management pattern of teaching and learning material both in-class and out-class implementations (Almujaiwel, 2018; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Sierra & Reina, 2022; Widodo, 2015).

Grammar takes a crucial position in the language learning process (Gebhard & Graham, 2018; Lohndal et al., 2019; Mart, 2013). For example, it is a tool for representing how the native language is used target language in social practices (Derewianka & Jones, 2010; Gumilar & Amalia, 2020; Setyono, 2018). As part of the crucial language teaching materials, the recognition of the importance to analyze textbooks has been documented in several prior studies (Al-Qatawneh &

Rawashdeh, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020; Renandya & Widodo, 2016; Richards & Reppen, 2014; Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Song, 2019).

Systemic functional grammar is the concept of understanding grammar of language using systemic functional linguistics (SFL) that see language as a social practices (Fontaine, 2013; Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Systemic functional grammar theory examined that there is a connection between structure of language with the function (social practices) of language (Fontaine, 2013; Huang, 2019). Therefore, this study try to announce the concept of functional grammar viewpoints in designing grammar exercises.

The conventional (traditional) grammar principles commonly explained grammar of language as a set of rules that builds language. Thus, it has only two main functions, i.e. (1) language as a set of rules, and (2) language as tool for communication (Fontaine, 2013). In response to this, functional grammar principles introduce meta-functional meanings of language (Derewianka & Jones, 2010; Fontaine, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Puspitasari et al., 2021; Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Widodo, 2015), i.e. (1) experiential meaning, (2) interpersonal meaning, and (3) textual meaning. Experiential meaning examines that language facilitates the users to share their experiences based on the specific circumstances. Interpersonal meaning explains that language can be used as tool for facilitating daily interaction in social life. Textual meaning describes that language is tool to deliver messages from a multimodal text, such as visual, audio visual, and others.

Grammar Studies that emphasized language as a resource to make meaning have been done over several decades (Bateman, 1989; Brickman, 1959; Cullen, 2008; Diamondstone, 2002; Setyono, 2018; Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Song, 2019). To sum up, having a good

understanding of functional grammar principles opens a bigger chance for the language learner to understand English grammar by getting an insight into the social practices of language. Another study by Maijala & Helmantel (2017) on examining the types of grammar exercises in several foreign language textbook series, such as the Dutch and Finnish textbooks for learning the German language (13–15 years). The result provides that the existing grammar exercises facilitates meaning-making process.

From these previous studies on grammar analysis and grammar teaching, several items are missing, i.e. (1) fewer studies that examine functional and traditional English grammar exercises; (2) providing learning materials development; and (3) providing new insight into the language is not just a set of rules, but it is a social semiotic resource. This study contributes into two main sectors, i.e. (1) learning materials

development, and (2) English textbook analysis. The researcher focused on providing the analysis and the example of upgrading traditional into functional grammar exercises by following several stages. In response to this, the following research questions guide the present study are: (1) Do the existing English grammar exercises provide an activity to make meaning?; and (2) How to reconstruct the traditional grammar exercises into functional grammar exercises?

METHOD

The present study includes in qualitative study that adopted critical document study as research methodology (Hatch, 2002). This study nuanced by the interpretivism paradigm and critical hermeneutics (Berryman, 2019; Roberge, 2011), The researchers intended to reveal the multiple agendas, meanings, ideologies, and social practices in the English textbook, especially in the English grammar exercises.



Figure 1. Research Paradigm

The English textbook for the study was published by the ministry of education entitled "English in Mind Student's Book Starter, Second Edition." The textbook was designed by using the independent curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar*). There were two analytical tools (transitivity analysis and critical discourse analysis) to reveal multiple agendas in the English grammar exercises in textbook (Fairclough, 2001, 2013; Fontaine, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

The researcher used the nine types of grammar exercises to achieve the quality and specific categorization of grammar exercises presented in textbook (Maijala & 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; and (9) Revision exercises.

This study adopted systemic functional grammar (transitivity analysis) and critical discourse analysis to analyze the existing English grammar exercises in textbook (Fairclough, 2013; Fontaine, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The analysis was started by categorizing the existing grammar exercises into nine types of grammar exercises. The use of transitivity analysis was to analyze the

textual data presented on the exercises. The researcher focused on analyzing the actors, processes, and circumstances in each sentences or phrases of the English grammar exercises. For example, John speaks Japanese everyday.



Figure 2 Sample of Data Coding

From this simple sentences, using transitivity analysis examined that the actor is Japanese and he still lived in Japan, because from the circumstances it showed "everyday", it means that he lived in a place that makes him using Japanese language everyday. Transitivity analysis provided an understanding related to the messages inside the sentences from the social practice lenses, ideologies, cultural

values, and agendas (Fontaine, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Teruya, 2009). Moreover, Bleiker et al. (2019) emphasized discourse analysis is fit to analyze the meaning-making process of data. The researcher provided the explanation from the textual and visual analysis to which extent grammar exercises content teaches functional grammar and uncover how such grammar exercises meet the functional grammar principles. The analysis result presented by using description, interpretation, and explanation (Fairclough, 2001, 2013).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The researcher started the analysis proses by categorizing the existing grammar exercises in the textbook based on the nine types of grammar exercises. After the analysis process using transitivity analysis and critical discourse analysis, the researchers focused on dividing the category of grammar exercises included into traditional grammar exercises and functional grammar exercises. Table 1 provides the findings of the existing grammar exercises in the textbook.

Table 1. The Existing Grammar Exercises in the Textbook

Textbook	Grammar Exercises	Total	Percentage
English in mind: Student's book starter, 2 nd ed.	Traditional Grammar Exercises	60	68.2 %
	Functional Grammar Exercises	28	31.8 %
Total Amount of Grammar Exercises		88	100 %

Table 2. Types of Grammar Exercises in the Textbook

Textbook	Types of Exercises	Types of Grammar	
		Functional Grammar	Traditional Grammar
English in mind: Student's book starter, 2 nd ed.	Category 1: Choose-the-correct-answer exercises	11 exercises	7 exercises
	Category 2: Fill-in-the-blank exercises	17 exercises	2 exercises
	Category 3: Written exercises	11 exercises	1 exercise
	Category 4: Communicative oral grammar exercises	4 exercises	4 exercises
	Category 5: Combining exercises	7 exercises	1 exercise
	Category 6: Grammar games	-	2 exercises
	Category 7: Translation exercises	-	-
	Category 8: Reflective/analytical exercises	9 exercises	9 exercises
	Category 9: Revision exercises	1 exercise	2 exercises

Table 1 presents the existing grammar exercises in the English textbook. It shows that the textbook contains and teaches functional principles. There are 28 exercises that provide students to make meaning. However, the design of the English grammar exercises in the textbook is dominated by traditional grammar exercises. Moreover, Table 2 provides the types of the existing grammar exercises in the textbook after the analysis processes.

Figure 3 presents an example of a grammar exercise from category 8. This exercise provides an activity that tries to make the readers or language learners have critical thinking ability in understanding and using language. This exercise consists of grammar instruction, visual items, and sentences.

To begin with, the analysis begins with analyzing the grammar instruction. The grammar instruction is to “look [Verbal] at the pictures and complete [Verbal] the sentences with this, that, these and those.” This grammar instruction adopts traditional grammar that sees grammar as a set of rules (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The actor of this grammar instruction intends to give the order for the readers or language learners to finish a specific grammar exercise.

c Look at the pictures and complete the sentences with this, that, these and those.

1. _____ are his sandwiches.

2. Is _____ my bag?

3. _____ aren't her shoes.

4. I think _____ is your ice cream.

Figure 3 Source: English in Mind: Student’s Book Starter, 2nd ed.” (grade 7), p.46

2. Is _____ my bag?

Figure 4. Source: English in Mind: Student’s Book Starter, 2nd ed.” (grade 7), p.46

Moreover, the next analysis focuses on analyzing the visual items in this exercise. Figure 4 presents an example of a grammar exercise from category 8. There are three main characters, i.e. a father, a mother, and a son. This visual item gives an insight to the readers or the language learners that they are looking for something important (identifying something). This emphasizes that the visual item gives a functional meaning to the language in social practices. The function of the visual items in grammar exercises is commonly for giving insight into the context, thus they can finish the exercise. The specific grammar materials are the quantifying determiners. It can be shown in number two of this exercise “is [identified] my bag [identifier]?” The readers and the language learners can finish the exercises if they are able to understand the social practices of the grammar materials. They possibly get the meaning of the exercises after reading the question and observing the visual item. Therefore, this exercise is included functional grammar exercises.

Understanding further, this exercise presents the multicultural ideology (see. Figure 3). Questions number 2 and 4 provides Islam religion ideology, when the woman in Islam must wear hijab (Dabbagh & Atai, 2022; Setyono & Widodo, 2019).

Steps to Revise the Traditional Grammar Exercises to Follow Functional Grammar Principles

This study is designed to give clear guidance to reconstruct the traditional grammar exercises activities using systemic functional grammar approach. Based on the data in Table 1, the textbook sees language as a set of rules by providing many traditional grammar exercises in the textbook. Figure 3 is an example of a traditional grammar exercise, i.e. Choose-the-correct-answer exercises. This exercise presents several

specific items, such as grammar instruction, answer options, and sentences. The exercise is designed into six questions and the first question becomes an example to finish the exercises for the next number.

a Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in the box.

ask read go watch play eat

1. My mum watches the news on TV at ten.
2. Arif _____ swimming every weekend.
3. Yahya _____ football with his cousin every Sunday.
4. We _____ fish on Fridays.
5. My friend _____ a lot of questions in our English lessons.
6. My parents _____ three newspapers on Sundays!

Figure 5. Source: English in Mind: Student’s Book Starter, 2nd ed., p.65

To begin with, the analysis begins by analyzing the grammar instruction using transitivity analysis (Fontaine, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Khaerudin & Chik, 2021). The grammar instruction is to “Complete [Material] the sentences [Goal] with the correct form of verbs in the box [Circumstances].” This examines that the writer or language teacher have a crucial position in giving order to the language learners or the readers. Moreover, the focus activity of this exercise is facilitating language learners to use variants of verbs at the sentence level. This is included into traditional grammar exercises when grammar is focused on rules of language. In addition, from the sentence level, there is an activity asking to choose the correct form of the verb in each sentence. It is included in traditional grammar because it only focused on understanding the grammar from rules implementation.

Therefore, this exercise is categorized as a traditional grammar exercise.

The crucial need to add and use functional grammar in designing grammar exercises has been emphasized by Halliday (1978). He stated that grammar provided a lot of functional rules of language that have a direct connection to the social practices of the language. To begin the revision stages, it starts with the revision of grammar instruction, answer options, structures of sentences, and additions of visual items in each sentence. Figure 6 shows the traditional grammar exercise.

a Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in the box.

Figure 6. Source: English in Mind: Student's Book Starter, 2nd ed., p.65

The traditional grammar instruction facilitates an activity to the readers or language learners to practice specific grammar rules. It needs to change the structure of grammar instruction using transitivity analysis. The grammar instruction is to "complete [Material, Verbal] the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in the box [Goal]." To make the instruction becomes functional, there is a need to change the goal of the sentence to avoid only mastering grammar items but understanding the social practices inside the grammar. The following is the revision suggestion for the grammar instruction is:

"Complete [**Material, Verbal**] the sentences with the specific social practices provided in the pictures [**Goal**]."

The next stage adds the appropriate visual items to help the readers or the language learners understand the social practices in each exercise. For example, the second item in the exercise (see. Figure 5) presents "Arif swimming every weekend." The structure of this sentence is included into the traditional

grammar exercises category. After adding the visual items in the exercises, there is a need to change the structure of the sentences that connect to the social practices in the exercise. The correct answer for the second item was "Arif [P] goes [Pro: Behavioral] swimming [P] every weekend [Circumstances]", it is still only traditional grammar if there is no relation to the social practices of the language. The following is the suggestion to revise by adding visual items and changing the sentence structures. The questions possibly have more contextual meaning than just grammar questions. What are expectations in your mind? If you see a question like this?

"Every weekend, Arif ... (go/goes/went/gone) swimming in the Ciliwung river."



Figure 7. Source: www.globeslice.com

This practical change provides a functional activity for the readers or the language learners to understand the grammar exercises. They will get several specific insights after understanding the questions and observing the picture. Moreover, the language learner also can make an assumption based on the picture. For example, Arif is a good swimmer, he is Indonesian, and every Indonesian child is a great swimmer. This is in line with the concept of functional grammar exercises that examine grammar as a tool for meaning-making that has a relation to the social practices of the language (Fontaine, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Song,

2019; Widodo, 2015). This evidence (see figure 3) shows that the traditional grammar exercise focuses on giving an experience to the readers or the language learners in using the correct form of grammar rules (e.g. pronouns, tenses, etc.).

The writer of the textbooks designed such an exercise to give students more confidence in mastering the grammar of a language. Grammar is included as a crucial element that has a direct impact on building other language skills (Lestariyana & Nurkamto, 2022). Therefore, learning grammar is not only about the rules of language, but it has the explicit or implicit meaning of social practices. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) explained that functional grammar provides a more useful way to teach grammar by understanding the social practices of the language.

This study provides a critical suggestion to add more functional grammar exercises for the next edition revision of the English textbook. Moreover, the English teacher also be able to design their own functional grammar exercises after understanding the differences between traditional and functional grammar exercises. Adding functional grammar exercises provides active activities for the language learner in learning grammar. The English teachers hopefully be able to choose the learning materials, especially English grammar exercises that presents a good ideology, culture, or other agendas to teach for the student.

CONCLUSION

All in all, the English textbook has implemented functional grammar principles to design the minimum amount of grammar exercises. It shows that the design of grammar exercises improved in line with the newest curricula (the independent curriculum) as the guidance to design learning materials. However, the textbook is mostly still dominated by

traditional grammar exercises. It is important to implement functional grammar in designing grammar exercises in English textbooks. Functional grammar plays a crucial element in learning a foreign language when we see a language from a wider perspective on how to use the language based on the context and culture of the language. The teacher can make a decision to use several grammar exercises to teach based on the good messages, ideology, cultural values, and agendas in the exercises. Moreover, The teacher is able to design their own functional grammar exercises by understanding the findings of this study. However, this study only provides textbook analysis, further studies need to focus on action studies where functional grammar exercises are implemented.

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