

## **Analysis of Interpersonal Meaning Realized in Online News Texts of the Bali Times**

**J. Sutomo**  
**Unisbank Semarang**

### **Abstract**

This study was conducted to portray some aspects of the contextual configuration of Bali Times's news texts. The study focused on the analysis of interpersonal meaning of the selected news text genre. The method used is descriptive. Descriptive research provides a detailed profile of an event, condition or situation using either quantitative, qualitative or a combination of methods. The approaches are quantitative and qualitative approaches of discourse analysis to unfold the the role of interpersonal meaning in news text genre. The results revealed that the interpersonal meaning plays an important role in news text genre, and it may convey the authorial subjectivity of the writers.

**Key words:** genre, news text genre, interpersonal meaning.

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

There are two kinds of communicative press media which can be used to access needed information in our modern daily lives, namely electronic media: television and radio, and printed media. Television seems to be the most popular one in the world, since to most people it is likely to be the most convenient to enjoy. Not only can we get necessary information broadcast through its news programs, but we can also watch many other interesting programs such as films, music, and quiz shows. The second popular press medium is radio. Although it is not as popular as television, it is presumably the widest press medium in the world as it is portable and relatively inexpensive, and it has existed long before the presence of television. Newspaper is one of the printed media which is much older than the two electronic media mentioned before. Nowadays, newspapers are not as popular as they used to be, but since their existence is now mostly supported by websites, their popularity is still capable of competing with other media.

There are many newspapers in English all over the world, and, as I mentioned before, most of them are now supported by websites. This makes people, wherever they are, able to access news provided that internet line is available. In this study, in line with the topic, I will access news texts from the news section of one of those newspaper websites, and my choice is the Bali Times Newspaper Website.

The Bali Times is Indonesia's leading English news website which directs daily news from the Island of Bali. The Bali Times is Bali's own newspaper, published in two editions. Online edition: a daily edition, seven days a week, and printed edition: a weekly edition, appearing on Fridays. I have chosen this website as the media to get the data of news text genre of which I will use them as objects of my analysis. One of the reasons why I choose the Bali Times is that it has been continuously publishing news in English for years, and it reaches readers in Bali and its neighbouring islands, as well as passengers on board Singapore Airlines.

An author may choose to deliver his/her intended message from various grammatical tools in the written language (McCabe and Heilman, 2007, p. 139). Online news text is one of the discourse texts in which real-world events are expressed through linguistic choices made by the reporters or journalists. That is, events are reconstructed as texts through discourse. This reconstruction involves linguistic choices at many turns and levels in the unfolding of the discourse.

Newspaper articles are commonly devoid of any authorial presence as they normally attempt to provide the aura of objectivity (McCabe and Heilman, 2007, p. 148). Bearing this in mind, this study was conducted to examine the traces of authorial subjectivity of online news texts of the Bali Times. The traces of authorial subjectivity will be conducted through the analysis of the interpersonal metafunction of the selected news texts. The focus of the discussion will be on the mood type, and modal auxiliary, personal pronouns and tense shift.

Based on the description in the background of the study, I determine that the statements of the problem of the research are as follows: How does the writer of the news text fulfill interpersonal meaning during the interaction in terms of mood type, modal auxiliary, personal pronouns and tense shift. Related to this research question, the objectives of the study is to portray some aspects of the contextual configuration of Bali Times's news texts by describing how the writer of the news text fulfills interpersonal meaning during the interaction in terms of mood type, modal auxiliary, personal pronouns and tense shift.

The study is concerned with genre analysis of news texts, and it is limited to the materials served as data, namely the transcripts of 15 news texts accessed from the news section of the Bali Times Newspaper Website (the name of the news section is *Headline Section*). These data were accessed on 25 February 2013, and they will be analyzed verbatim, viz. using exactly the same words as were originally used.

In this chapter, we will present the concepts that underlie our study. The underlying theory of data analysis is *Systemic Functional Grammar* offered by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), and *Systemic Functional Linguistics* by Suzanne Eggins (1994), which comprise the three elements of context of situation which are linguistically known as metafunctions, namely ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. This study, however, will only focus on interpersonal metafunction.

Learning a language is not simply a matter of learning vocabulary and grammar, but we have to understand the context of culture and other people's meanings because we share the same cultural knowledge. When we have a communication orally or in writing, we make selections to choose appropriate meanings for the field, tenor and mode of a context of situation (David Butt et al, 1996:23).

The field of a context of situation, refers to what is happening, to the nature of social action that is taking place. The tenor of a context of situation refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles. The mode of a context of situation refers to what part the language is playing, what it is that the participants are expecting the language to do for them in that situation. Howard (1984: 2) and Eggins (1994: 32) call those three aspects of situation register variables. They further say that register variables have a direct and significant impact on the type of language that will be produced.

Context of Situation is a term coined by Bronislaw Malinowski (Malinowski, 1923; Coppock, 1996). Wookey (2002) states that Context of Situation refers to the

environment of the text. The term context, up to that point, means merely the words and sentences before and after the text in question. This context of situation includes the entire environment surrounding the written or spoken text. The text is immersed in the other element of the situation, and is understood because of the surrounding situation.

The term context of situation has evolved within a period of time. Firth (1950) describes the context of situation using the following headings: participants, action (verbal and non-verbal), other relevant features of the situation, and effects. Meanwhile, Dell Hymes (1967) proposes a set of concepts for describing the context of situation as the following: form and content of the message, setting, participants, intent and effect of the communication, key, medium, genre, and norm of interaction.

Concerning news texts, they belong to genre since news texts are written using language to exchange communicative purposes or social purposes by writers or journalists. The definition of genre is a communicative event or social activity in which language is used to exchange communicative purposes or social purposes through a number of stages, each of which is given a functional explanation. A communicative event is a social situation, recognized by a community, in which written or spoken language is used for communication between individuals or groups (Bloor, 2002). The linguistic products of a repeated communicative event may become established as genres. News texts are genres associated with the communicative events known as news service, a communicative event between writers and readers.

A communicative purpose is a term recognized in a text, and simply refers to what the speaker or writer is doing or aims to do when he / she communicates (Swales, 1990; Bloor, 2002). Bhatia (1997) suggests that we should take communicative purpose as the key characteristic feature of a genre. News texts, for instance, have communicative purposes to report the latest information of events. That is to say, they have a common social purpose and they use language to express it, hence they constitute a genre.

Communication is an interactive process by means of language; language delivers messages from an interlocutor to others. Since communication is available to exist among people, it is inevitably influenced by interlocutors. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to how language makes meanings in spoken or written discourse in terms of grammar and meanings. There are many ways of determining functions of languages. One approach is to consider grammar as 'a set of rules which specify all the possible grammatical structures of the language' (Lock, 1996, p.1). Another approach is focusing on the functions of grammatical structures, and their meanings in the social context. The latter approach of grammatical analysis is called functional; it is Systemic Functional Linguistics. Systemics focuses on 'how the grammar of a language serves as a resource for making and exchanging meanings' (Lock, 1996, p.3). That is, it is concerned with the grammatical patterns and lexical items used in text, as well as choices of those items, focusing on 'the development of grammatical systems as a means for people to interact with each other' (Martin et al., 1997, p.1).

Certain grammatical structures and certain words do not always make the same meaning; 'the same words can have a different communicative function in a different situation' (Bloor & Bloor, 2004, p.10). That is, meanings are influenced by the social situation. On the other hand, different utterances can work with the same communicative function. The choice of grammatical structure should be dependant on the situation in which the utterance was given. As a result, it can be considered that social contexts decide words and grammatical structures.

Interpersonal meanings focus on the interactivity of the language, and concern the ways in which we act upon one another through language. In either spoken texts or written texts, an interlocutor expects to tell listeners/readers via text. This means that each text has a relationship between providers of information and recipients of information. The information can be conveyed in declarative, interrogative, or imperative mood. See the following sentences as an example:

1. (Declaratives) Mike arrived at school at nine o'clock.
2. (Interrogatives) Did Mike arrive at school at nine o'clock?  
or What time did Mike arrive at school?  
or Where did Mike arrive at nine o'clock?
3. (Imperatives) Tell me when Mike arrived at school.

In the declaratives, the information is provided from the interlocutor to a listener/reader; the former is a provider of information and the latter is a recipient of information. But in the interrogatives, we can see the opposite movement of information; the interlocutor expects to receive an answer (yes/no, at nine o'clock, or at school) from a listener/reader. This shows that the former is a recipient of information, and the latter is a (potential) provider of information. Finally, in the imperatives, the interlocutor demands the information to a listener/reader; the former is a recipient of information, and the latter is a provider of information/service, as in the case of the

interrogatives. The relationship between interlocutors and listeners/ readers is shown as follows:

Table 1: Relationship of Interlocutors and Listeners/Readers

	Interlocutor	Listener/Reader
Declaratives (Statement)	Provider of information	Recipient of information
Interrogatives	Recipient of information	Provider of information
Imperatives (Demand)	Recipient of information/ Recipient of goods & services	Provider of information/ Provider of goods & services

It is noteworthy that such relationships of interlocutors are, naturally, influenced by the social situation, and as such, the interlocutors' positions will maintain some element of flexibility. Example 3 above, *Tell me when Mike arrived at school*, can be replaced by (1) *You should tell me when Mike arrived at school*, or (2) *Would you tell me when Mike arrived at school?* etc. Sentence (1) demands the service more strongly by using the word *should* rather than the original. On the other hand, sentence (2) represents a very polite request by using the phrase *Would you ... ?*, and the demand of service is not so strong as the original. Although each sentence conveys the same message, they show the difference in terms of the subtle nuance behind the message. Moreover, sentence (1) carries a demanding message by a declarative sentence, and sentence (2) does it through an interrogative sentence. This means that the interlocutor of sentence (1) can become a recipient of service. As a result, sentence forms sometimes work together to make up for meanings.

Following the functional-semantic tradition, Halliday and Hassan (1985:12) propose a conceptual framework serving to interpret the social context of a text, the environment in which meanings are being exchanged. The framework is under the following headings: (1) The field of the discourse refers to what is happening, to the nature of social action that is taking place. (2) The tenor of the discourse refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles. (3) The mode of the discourse refers to what part the language is playing, what it is that the participants are expecting the language to do for them in that situation. Howard (1984: 2) and Eggins (1994: 32) call those three aspects of situation register variables. They further say that register variables have a direct and significant impact on the type of language that will be produced.

Tenor, as mentioned before, refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles. The tenor is significant in the context of situation, and it is needed to be analyzed as it is closely related to interpersonal metafunction or meaning. When people communicate, they actually exchange commodity. The commodity itself is divided into two parts namely information and goods and services. When they demand or give information, they create either question or statement. If they demand or give goods or services, they will create either command or offer (Eggins, 1994:146-153).

The analysis of interpersonal meaning deals with two components that are mood element and residue element of the clause. The mood element includes subject, finite and/or mood adjunct while the residue consists of predicator, complement and some adjuncts such as mood, polarity, comment, vocative or circumstantial adjunct (Egins, 1994:154-169).

When we interact with people, we use language clearly to convey the unlimited purposes: we may want to order, apologize, confirm, invite, reject, describe and so on. These semantic features are realized by the grammatical system of mood, whose categories include indicative and imperative moods. So, in an interaction, meanings may be exchanged by giving information. The meanings are worded in declarative, then expressed as sequences of letters, syllables etc. in the system of graphology in writing.

Halliday (2000) views that through modality the speaker takes up a position and signals the status and validity of his own judgments. If the commodity being exchanged is information, the clauses are labeled as proposition and modality expressions are termed as modalization which refers to the validity of proposition in terms of probability and usuality. If the commodity is goods and service, modality expressions are defined as proposals and are termed as modulation which reflects how confident the speaker can be in the eventual success of the exchange in terms of obligation and inclination. There are a large number of ways to realize modality, including modal auxiliary, adverbs, intonation and mental-process verbs.

Tense shift is changing from one verb tense to another (usually from past to present, or vice versa) within a sentence or paragraph. In prescriptive grammar, writers are cautioned to avoid unnecessary shifts in tense. Unmotivated shifts between present and past may obscure meaning and confuse readers. For example:

"The bridge was still open then, and I was up there one day mowing the grass alongside the road, just minding my own business, when I see something moving out of the corner of my eye." (C.J. Fisher, *The Legend of Diadamia*. AuthorHouse, 2005).

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

Concerning unit of analysis, I decided that the unit of analysis was the clause. This was to follow Egins (1994) who states that when the stratum of language to analyze is lexico-grammar, the unit of analysis or description is the clause. Mirador (2000: 47) uses the term *move*, that is the unified functional meaning of a sentence or group of sentences in a written or spoken text. Concerning the data collection, I applied sampling method. Sampling is the process of selecting elements or respondents representative of the populations under study (Polit & Beck 2004:291). A sample should be representative of the population from which it is selected to enable generalization of finding to be made about that population (Babbie & Mouton 2001:124). There are two methods of sampling: (1) random sampling: one yields probability samples in which the probability of selection of each respondent is assessed; (2) purposive sampling: one yields non-probability samples in which the probability of selection is unknown (Polit & Beck 2004:295). In this study I use both methods of sampling: random and purposive samplings to access the data. The method used in this study is descriptive research method. Polit and Beck (2004:192) declare that the purpose of descriptive research is to observe, describe and document aspects of a situation as it occurs naturally. Descriptive research provides a detailed profile of an event, condition or situation using either quantitative, qualitative or a combination of methods.

To deal with approach, I applied both quantitative and qualitative approaches of discourse analysis to unfold the genre of news texts on the basis of a genre model analysis offered by Eggins (1994).

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 1. Analysis of Mood

When we interact with people, we use language clearly to convey the unlimited purposes: we may want to order, apologize, confirm, invite, reject, describe and so on. According to Halliday, most of the fundamental purposes in any exchange are giving (and taking) or demanding (and being given) a commodity of some kind (Halliday, 2000). Halliday (2000) classified two kinds of commodity, which he termed as “information” and “goods-service” and then four speech roles can be identified in Table 2.

Table 2: Basic Speech Roles

role \ commodity	goods-service	information
giving	offer	statement
demanding	command	question

(Halliday, 2000)

Generally speaking, in news texts, statements are most naturally expressed by declarative clauses. In Functional Grammar, the subject and finite make up the mood and the subject-finite positioning in a clause realizes different speech functions, which plays a vital role in carrying out the interpersonal meaning of the clause as exchange and serves a reflection of social role and identity (Eggins & Slade, 1997).

In the selected news texts, all of the clauses adopt declarative mood. There are some considerations why the writers chose to use declarative mood. First of all, they are the information-giver and they need to state out his information explicitly and clearly. Secondly, from the declarative mood, the relation between the writers and the readers is marked and their authority, status and administration are well established.

Declarative sentences not only function as describing, explaining, confirming, but also as advising, suggesting and encouraging. For example, in news text 1:

*In a plenary cabinet meeting, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono reminded the Indonesian people that floods and landslides occurring in several Indonesian regions lately have indicated that natural disasters are not over yet in this country and therefore the people must always be on full alert.*

*“I remind you that Indonesia is not yet safe from natural disasters,” he said.*

As a president, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has the authority to make comments and analysis of current issues. His statements are believed not only to be convincing and confirming, but also advising and encouraging.

Based on the analysis conducted on the *Mood Selection* of the selected news texts, I present the finding in the summary of profile of the mood selection as in the following table:

Table 3: Summary of Profile of Mood Selection

Total clause		198	%	
Mood type:	Indicative	Declarative	198	100 %
		Interrogative	-	-

	Imperative	-	-
Subject	Interactant	-	-
	Non-interactant	198	100 %
Deicticity	Temporal	Simple Present	42 21.2 %
		Present perfect	6 3.1 %
		Simple Past	135 68.2 %
		Past perfect	5 2.5 %
		Future	5 2.5 %
	Modality	Modalized: capability	5 2.5 %
		Modulated: inclination	5 2.5 %
Polarity	+	192	96.9 %
		6	3.1 %

There are two essential functional constituents of the *mood* component of the clause, namely the *Subject* and the *Finite*. The finding shows that there is no *imperative mood*, all the *mood* is indicative. There is no *interrogative mood* either, all the *mood* is *declarative*. It implies that all clauses of the news texts are *declarative clauses*, where the *Subject* of each clause precedes the *Finite*, *Predicator*, *Complement* and *Adjunct*.

Concerning the *Subject*, the finding shows that all the subjects are non-interactants (100 %) which means that all the subjects are the third persons, either in singular or plural forms. Supported by *positive polarity* (96.9 %), these characterize the communicative purposes of the news texts.

The next linguistic feature is the *Finite: Temporal Finite*, which connects the *Subject* and the *Verb* by reference to time, is dominated by the Simple Past Tense (68.2 %) and the Simple Present Tense (21.2 %), and *Modal Finite*, which connects the *Subject* and the *Verb* by reference to *Modality*, is only 5 %. This implies that most of the events in the news texts take place in the past time, and some of them take place in the present time. The modality, which is only 5 %, means that a few events take place in the future time.

## 2. Analysis of modal auxiliary

Halliday (2000) views that through modality the speaker takes up a position and signals the status and validity of his own judgments. There are a large number of ways to realize modality, including modal auxiliary, adverbs, intonation and mental-process verbs. This sub-chapter, however, will only focus on modal auxiliary, and Table 4 presents the frequency of modal auxiliary used in the selected news texts.

Table4: The Frequency of Modal Auxiliary

Modal auxiliary	will	can / could
modality	inclination / futurity	ability / possibility
frequency	5	5

From the above table, we can see that “will” is used fivetimes. It is mainly employed to provide information about what will exactly happen in the future, namely in: Ngurah Rai Airport *will be closed* temporarily (News Text 2); It *will allow* the airlines not to ... (News Text 2); ... and it *won't be closed*(News Text 9);To support the



data, *it will reflect back* to ... (News Text 11); The Bali provincial government *will distribute* scholarship cards to students who come from poor families (News Text 14).

The use of modal auxiliary *can* and *could* which are employed to show *capability* also appears five times, and can be seen in: Also last January, in many Indonesian regions, ships and boats *could not sail* (News Text 1); The service held in Mengwi district Badung regency *could embrace* many acceptors to use long-term ... (News Text 10); Having two children *could guarantee to continue* education until university (News Text 10); The danger in some voting spots *could be seen* from its demography, geography and criminality. (News Text 11); However the art and unique skills to produce crafts *can contribute* to foreign foreign exchange revenue of Bali (News Text 15).

### 3. Analysis of Personal Pronouns

In respect of personal pronouns as subjects of the clauses, since the finding shows that each subject is non-interactant, its substitution is he or she. Therefore, all those clauses are expressed in declarative moods. For more detail analysis, however, further research may be conducted on the projected clauses which are written in direct speeches. As each clause may contain the first person singular ( I ) or plural ( we ) as a subject, this is categorized as *interactant*, *I* acts as a *speaker* such as in: “I remind you that Indonesia is not yet safe from natural disasters.” (News Text 1), and *we* acts as a *speaker+* such as in: “We deport those 12 Chinese migrant workers since they don’t have work license from the Manpower affairs Ministry or related authorities” (News Text 6).

### 4. Analysis of Tense Shift

In some titles (headlines) of the news reports, there are ellipsions of “be” which imply that the writers want to create an impression that the messages they present are still fresh and up to date; the facts show that some of the events occurred in the past time. For example, in news text 1: “Natural Disasters [are/were] not over yet,” news text 3: “Methanol [is/was] Found in Lethal Drink,” and news text 8: “The Local Cultural Value [is/was] to Reform Bureaucracy.”

In other headlines, writers use *the present tense*, but start the message directly using *the past tense*. For example: in news text 5, the headline is “Landslides Kill Two People in Buleleng,” the first sentence of the report: Two victims of landslides at Gitgit village, Buleleng regency, Bali *was found died*; in news text 11, the headline is “50 Percent Election Spots are Dangerous,” the first sentence of the report: Bali Regional Police Station Chief Irjen Pol Arif Wachyunadi *said* that ...

To create fresh impressions, some writers use *the present tense* to start new move, then shift into *the past tense*. For example, in news text 1:

1. Over the last few months, various regions in Indonesia *have been hit* by natural disasters ... (*Present*)
2. Floods and landslides *were mainly triggered* by relatively high precipitation during ... (*Past*)
3. Since the beginning of the rainy season in November 2012, floods and landslides *have been reported* in many provinces ... (*Present*)
4. In Jakarta alone, at least 20 people *were reportedly killed* in major floods ... (*Past*)

## D. CONCLUSION

The finding shows that all the *mood* is *declarative*. It implies that all clauses of the news texts are *declarative clauses*, where the *Subject* of each clause precedes the *Finite*, *Predicator*, *Complement* and *Adjunct*. All the subjects are non-interactants (100 %) which means that all the subjects are the third persons, either in singular or plural forms. Supported by *positive polarity* (96.9 %), these characterize the communicative purposes of the news texts.

Modal auxiliaries used are *will*, *can* and *could*. *Willis* used five times. It is mainly employed to provide information about what will exactly happen in the future. The use of modal auxiliary *can* and *could* which are employed to show *capability* also appears five times.

There are ellipsions of “be” in some headlines, which imply that the writers want to create an impression that the messages they present are still fresh and up to date; the facts show that some of the events occurred in the past time. To show freshness, some writers use *the present tense* for the headlines, although all eventstake place *the past tense*. To create fresh impressions, some writers use *the present tense* to start new move, then shift into *the past tense*. These show the authorial subjectivity of the writers in reporting the events.

## E. REFERENCES

- Babbie, E & Mouton, J. (2001). *The Practice of Social Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bhatia, Vijay K. (1997). Introduction: Genre Analysis and World Englishes. *World Englishes*, 16: 313-19.
- Bloor, Merial. (2002). Communicative event. *svsflin enlists, ed.ac.uk*, January 14<sup>th</sup> 2002.
- Bloor, T. and Bloor, M. (2004). *The Functional Analysis of English: A Hallidayan Approach*. 2nd ed. New York: Arnold.
- Butt, David et al. (1996). *Using Functional Grammar: An Explorer's Guide*. Sydney: Clarendon Printing Pty
- Coppock, Patrick J. (1996). Context, main issues Retrieved from <http://boogie.cs.unitn.it/eccs-97/Diseussion/Archives/O009.html> (25 April 2013)
- Eggs, Suzanne. (1994). *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*. UK: Pinter Publisher Ltd.
- Firth, J.R. (1950). *Personality and Language in Society*, *Sociological Review* 42. London: Oxford University Press.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (2000). *An introduction to functional grammar*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K. and Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen. (2004). Third edition. *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Arnold Publishers.
- Howard, Philip. 1984, *The State of Language: English Observed*. Great Britain: Cox & Wyman Ltd.
- Hymes, Dell. (1967). Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Setting. *Journal of Social Issues* 23.
- Lock, G. (1996). *Functional English Grammar: An introduction for second language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1923. *The Problem of meaning in Primitive Languages*, in Ogden, C.K. & Richards, I.A. 1946. *The Meaning of Meaning*, New York: Harcourt.
- Martin, J. R., Matthiessen, C. M. I. M., and Painter, C. (1997). *Working with Functional Grammar*. London: Arnold.
- McCabe, A. and Heilman, K., (2007). Textual and interpersonal differences between a news report and an editorial. *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, 20, 139-156
- Polit, DF & Beck, CT. (2004). *Nursing research: principles and methods*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Philadelphia. Lippincott Williams & Williams.
- Swales, J.M. (1990). *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wu Qi. (2012). Systemic Functional Perspective: Functions of Marked Theme in English. Dept. of foreign languages, Jiujiang University, Jiangxi Jiujiang, 332005. International Conference on Education Technology and Management Engineering. *Lecture Notes in Information Technology*, Vols.16-17