

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

**THE TRANSITIVITY ELEMENTS AND IDEOLOGY:  
A NEWSPAPER HEADLINES ANALYSIS ON MH370 FLIGHT  
ACCIDENT**

**1. Introduction**

**1.1 Background of The Problem**

Over the last 500 years, mass media have become a part of human life in giving people information about what is happening in the world. First, there are printed mass media such as newspapers, magazines, books, and others. The second is electronic mass media such as television, radio, computer, and et cetera.

The part of giving people information set medias themselves to become common subjects of analyzing literary text for linguists all the time. Apart from various types and sub-types of mass media, newspapers are commonly used as a medium of written discourse analysis. Owing to its large coverage of information starting from politics, economy, national and international events, newspaper is one of the most widely-read types of written text.

Newspaper headlines in a newspaper are considered a crucial part of news since headlines can attract someone to buy a newspaper. It is quite common that people who buy a newspaper will take their glance first to the headlines to consider whether it is worth reading for them or not. Therefore, newspaper headlines should be eye-catching, memorable, impacted, and written in short words, but reflecting the overall picture of the current news.

Newspaper itself undoubtedly has power in persuading readers. Its purpose is to change reader's attitude or point of view which is usually represented through emotional statements and choices of grammar structures. In fact, the choices of grammar structures in the newspaper, especially headlines, are varied and complex. Because of those varieties and complexity, the writer decides to conduct an analysis of newspaper headlines with relying heavily on one of the most extensively used linguistic theories, Hallidayan Linguistic proposed by Michael Halliday.

Halliday (2004: 29) in his book of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) stated that language is a system of meaning which means that when people use language, their language acts are the expression of meaning. This point of view brings grammar as a study of how meanings are built up through the use of words. Also, in his book of SFG, Halliday (2004) stated that language has three strands of function, namely, interpersonal function, textual function, and ideational function. Three of them are commonly known as Metafunctions.

In this thesis, however, the writer will only focus on ideational meaning. Halliday (2004) explained that ideational meaning in language is concerned with the clause as representation; how human being build a mental picture of reality with language, how they make sense of what is goes on around them and inside them. Further, Halliday (2004) mentions that those goings-on cover happening, doing, meaning, being, and becoming. Hence, it is concerned by an option of transitivity.

Traditionally, transitivity is associated with grammatical feature which indicates whether a verb takes a direct object (transitive verb). However, Halliday (1985) in his *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, extends the old concept into a further development. Halliday (1985) argues that whether a verb takes or does not take a direct object is not a prime consideration.

In his latter concept of transitivity, Halliday (1985) claimed that instead of merely a matter of a verb taking or not taking a direct object, transitivity in clauses serves to give the readers an impression of what took place in the news event by linking the three main elements for creating meaning. Those three main elements are called *the processes*, *the participants*, and *the circumstances*.

*The processes* serve as the description of what happened. Meanwhile, *the participants* explain the one or ones who are responsible in the process. And *the circumstances* explain how both actions and those responsible are described (associated with the process). Halliday (1985) further explained how to differentiate those three elements in transitivity. As for the *processes*, they are realized by verbal groups. Meanwhile, the *participants* are realized by nominal groups, and as for *circumstances*, they are realized by adverbial groups or prepositional phrases.

Based on these backgrounds too, the writer decides to use Halliday's transitivity approach of Systematic Functional Grammar (SFG) because it can be used to analyze language, especially in headlines in a newspaper. The writer aims to identify and explain what transitivity processes, participants, and

circumstances are formed in the headlines of the three following newspapers: *The Jakarta Post*, *The Star*, and *China Daily*.

Those three respective newspapers are selected over others as they provide extensive and frequent coverage of the data of this study. It should be noted here that the three nations, *Indonesia*, *Malaysia*, and *China*, where the three newspapers chosen owned by, suffer a tragic loss of their onboard citizen in plane crash on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2014.

The data selected for analysis here are the headlines of *Malaysia Airlines Flight 370* or simply stated and known as '*MH370*' *Flight Accident* news report. Flight MH370 was reported missing since 8<sup>th</sup> March 2014 until present. The plane was scheduled to arrive at *Beijing Capital International Airport, People's Republic of China* from *Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Malaysia*. There were 12 Malaysian crews members and 227 passengers from different nations onboard in this missing plane including Chinese, Malaysian, and Indonesian.

A multinational search effort to this missing plane was conducted. The searches began in the Gulf of Thailand and extended until the last reported place, Southern Indian Ocean. However, during the investigation conducted to find this missing plane, there were various official assumptions ongoing, such as the cause of the loss of the flight, the location of the crash, and the status of passengers onboard.

The loss of *Flight MH370* had caused a sensational news story and invited different emotional worldwide reaction. Therefore, the loss of *Flight*

*MH370* was specifically a conflict that may be seen, interpreted or evaluated in different, possibly opposed ways. Thus, according to this background as well, the writer will also try to analyze ideologies found and conveyed in the headlines of the three nations' major newspapers: *The Jakarta Post* from Indonesia, *The Star* from Malaysia, and *China Daily* from China.

Hence, this paper is meant as an attempt the way in analyzing newspaper headlines by relying heavily on Halliday's transitivity system, which has three prior elements, namely processes, participants, and circumstances, and as an attempt in finding the ideologies implied from the three respective newspapers taken as the sources of data.

## **1.2 Statement of The Problem**

In line with the background of this study, the problems are constructed as follows:

1. What transitivity processes are found in the headlines of *The Jakarta Post*, *The Star*, and *China Daily*?
2. Who are the transitivity participants that are found in the headlines of *The Jakarta Post*, *The Star*, and *China Daily*?
3. What transitivity circumstances are found in the headlines of *The Jakarta Post*, *The Star*, and *China Daily*?
4. What similarities and differences of transitivity processes, participants, and circumstances are found in the headlines of *The Jakarta Post*, *The Star*, and *China Daily*?

5. What is the implying ideology that is found in the headlines of *The Jakarta Post*, *The Star*, and *China Daily*?

### **1.3 The Objectives of The Study**

From the problem formulated above, this research aims to:

1. Identify the transitivity processes in the headlines in *The Jakarta Post*, *The Star*, and *China Daily*.
2. Identify the transitivity participants in the headlines in *The Jakarta Post*, *The Star*, and *China Daily*.
3. Identify the transitivity circumstances in the headlines in *The Jakarta Post*, *The Star*, and *China Daily*.
4. Describe the similarities and differences of transitivity processes, participants, and circumstances found in the headlines of *The Jakarta Post*, *The Star*, and *China Daily*.
5. Describe the ideologies found in the headlines of *The Jakarta Post*, *The Star*, and *China Daily*.

### **1.4 Theoretical Framework**

The underlying theory supporting this study is the theory of transitivity, and language and ideology. Briefly, these theories will be presented below.

Halliday (1970:145-150) stated that language is used to represent a speaker's experience of the world (its ideational function). The expression of the experience involves the configuration of particular 'meaning components', or 'semantic roles' (1970:146) to communicate about happenings (termed:

‘Processes’), persons, objects, and entities involved in those happenings (‘Participants’), and different aspects of those happenings (‘Circumstances’). In addition, Bloor&Bloor (1995: 106-107) explained that language plays a crucial role in our relation with other people, animate matter, such as animals, and inanimate matter.

‘Process’ is part of a clause realized by the verbal group or regarded as what ‘goings-on’ (Bloor&Bloor, 1995: 109). Further, as what this study deals with, Halliday in his *Systemic Functional Grammar* divides ‘Process’ into six processes, namely material process, mental process, verbal process, behavioral process, relational process, and existential process.

On the other hand, the ‘Participants’, are the entities involved in the process (Bloor&Bloor: 1995: 109). In addition, Halliday (1999) says that different types of process involve different types of participants: every experiential clause has at least one participant and other types have up to three participants. Participants are mostly humans, or at least animate, but it is also possible to be inanimate.

In his *Systemic Functional Grammar*, Halliday (1985) claims that there are three notion of ‘Circumstance’. First, circumstances refer to examples such as location, space, manner, cause, and time. Second, according to Bloor&Bloor (1995), ‘Circumstance’ is concerned with such matters as settings (time and place), the manner regarding how the process is implemented, and the people or other entities accompanying the process rather than directly engaged in it.

Further, in accordance to lexical choices, ‘Processes’ most usually being realized in English by verb phrases, ‘Participants’ by nominal group/noun phrases and ‘Circumstances’ by adverbials.

According to Halliday’s theory of transitivity elements, *processes*, *participants*, and *circumstances*, occur in a clause or a sentence in a literary text. In relation to the above, it may also be useful to view the elements of clause in terms of Subject-Predicator-Complement-Adjunct Structure (S-P-C-A) as illustrated below:

The student	reads	the book	carefully	in the library	<b>(sentence/clause)</b>
Participant: Actor	Process: Material	Participant: Goal	Circumstance	Circumstance	<b>(transitivity)</b>
Nominal group	Verbal group	Nominal group	Adverbial group	Prepositional phrase	<b>(Class)</b>
Subject	predicator	complement	adjunct	adjunct	<b>(clause structure)</b>

Van Dijk (1998) has given by far the most contribution of comprehensive study of the relationships among discourse, ideology, and media. According to van Dijk (1993), ideologies have a function as interface between the cognitive representation and processes underlying discourse and action. It means that people use process as their indicators of perceiving information. In news report, what journalists write in their report will affect the reader’s perception. Thus, with such relation between cognitive representation and processes, transitivity framework can be used to analyze ideological perspectives in news headlines.

### **1.5 The Significance of The Study**

The findings of the study will serve as knowledge in assisting teachers and learners of English to understand more about the nature of the structure of sentences which are realized by processes, the participants involved in the processes, and the circumstances. Moreover, this study is expected to give help for readers to discover the relation between meaning and wording in account of language feature in a text. This study is also expected to give contribution to the discourse study of English used in news reports. Finally, this study is expected to give benefits to readers in understanding reading texts, particularly news reports and headlines.

### **1.6 Limitation and Scope**

Due to the limited time and resources, the analysis is limited to headlines of MH370 Flight Accident in the respective three following newspapers: *The Jakarta Post*, *The Star*, and *China Daily* within a period of 8<sup>th</sup> March until 30<sup>th</sup> April. Furthermore, the transitivity analysis is limited to Halliday's systemic functional grammar transitivity framework which discusses processes, participants, and circumstances.

### **1.7 Definition of Key Terms**

To avoid misinterpretation, the following key terms used in this thesis are defined below. These key terms are discourse, headline, news, clause, transitivity, transitivity process, transitivity participants, transitivity circumstance, and ideology.

1. Discourse: in a wider sense, is a complex unit of language form, meaning, an action that might best be captured under the notion of a communicative event or communicative act. (van Dijk, 1988)
2. Headline: the most conspicuous part of a news report: they are brief, printed 'on top', in large bold type, and often across several columns. In addition to summarizing the most important information of the report, headlines also have cognitive and ideological functions. (van Dijk, 1988a, 1988b, 1991)
3. News: the communication of information of current events which is presented by print, broadcast, internet, or word of mouth to a third part or mass audience. (Stephens, 2007)
4. Clause: the product of three simultaneous realization of ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. (Halliday, 1981: 42)
5. Transitivity: the configuration of particular meaning components, or semantic roles to communicate about happenings (processes), persons, objects, entities involved in those happenings (participants), and different aspects of those happenings (circumstances) made manifest via particular lexico grammar choices. (Halliday, 1985)
6. Transitivity process: a part of the clause that is realized by the verbal group, but it can also be regarded as what 'goings-on' are represented in the whole clause. (Bloor&Bloor, 1995: 109)
7. Transitivity participants: the entities involved in the process. (Bloor&Bloor, 1995:109)

8. Transitivity circumstance: the settings, temporal and physical, the manner in which the process is implemented, and the people or other entities accompanying the process rather than directly engaged in it. (Bloor&Bloor, 1995: 131)
9. Ideology: sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use.  
(Woolard&Schiedffelin, 1994: 57)

### **1.8. Organization of The Thesis**

This study consists of five chapters, namely Introduction, Review of Related Literature, and Research Methodology, Findings and Discussion, and Conclusion.

Chapter one is the explanations of background of the proposal, statement of the problem, objectives, significance, scope and limitation of the study, definition of key terms, theoretical framework, and the organization of the study.

Chapter two reviews the related literature and previous study. This chapter discusses the related theories, which are used in and relevant to this study.

Chapter three deals with the research design, the source of data taken for the study, the instrument used, the procedure of data collection, and the procedure of data analysis.

Chapter four discusses the findings along with the explanation of the findings, while chapter five consists of the conclusion of the thesis and the recommendation from the writer.