

Learning Journal and the Students' Achievement in Grammar Class: Transitivity Analysis

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Abstract

Learning journal enables students to reflect of what they have experienced in the learning process. This article presents the students' learning journal in grammar class. For some students, grammar is seen as a course which does not attract their interest. It resulted on their ignorance of the course. However, students have to face the fact that grammar is an integral part of their literacy as it affects the meaning of their utterances, both spoken and written. The participants involved were the 37 students of English Letters Department, Sanata Dharma University. The students were in Structure IV course, one of grammar classes offered by the study program. The instruments involved were the students' learning journal wrtten during the semester and their final grades. The learning journal was analyzed by means of Halliday's transitivity. The findings reveal that most of the students used material process in their learning journal, while mental and relational processes do not appear often in the journal. The students' achievement in class is dominated by an A in the end of the semester. Relating the two findings above, this article concludes that students' practice of their knowledge in their social life affects their achievement in class. The employment of material process in the students' learning journal reveals the students' practice and purpose of learning grammar.

Keywords: learning journal, grammar, transitivity

A. Introduction

Grammar is an inseparable part from language learning. In learning English as a second language, students sometimes find barriers in comprehending the language pattern, particularly when it is different from their mother tongue. For example, the concept of different verb form in different tense is absent in Indonesia, but present in English. The previous example becomes one of the greatest problems faced by Indonesian students. They are, then, exposed on grammar activities in learning the language. Some strategies have also been offered to motivate them learn grammar because teaching grammar involves not only teaching how to use language correctly, but also appropriately and accurately.

Some students think that grammar is about rule. They memorize the patterns, but only some apply them in their daily communication. As an integral part of language learning, students should exercise their literacy, including correct grammar, in their real life. They should have experience on using grammar in different situations and purposes. Students, as language users, start to be aware of specific instances of constructions that are conventionalized and the multiple ways in which frequency of use has impact on structure (Schoenemann et al., 2009, p. 5). It is proven by the familiarity of students' use of English in social media.

Teaching grammar opens challenges for teachers. Various approaches have been offered to help teachers minimize the problems and students comprehend grammar easier. However, what happens in class matters more. The context of students involving their cognitive and cultural background influences the success of teaching grammar. To assist students from various background, teachers should provide materials and activities which motivate them to use what they learn in classroom in their life.

One of the ways to motivate students use English outside classroom is by means of learning journal. Learning journal, or what so-called as reflective journal, is related much to experience as it helps students to learn from their experiences, so it is important to explore the process of learning from the experience (Moon, 2006, p. 21). The students are motivated to apply their knowledge they gain in classroom in their life. From their experience, the students should reflect on what they have done outside classroom related to what they have learned in classroom. The reflection is not restricted on their competence, but also compassion and conscience.

Reflection and reflective activity are linked to teaching actions, thinking, development, awareness, beliefs, assessment, and educational reform (Roskos, Vukelich, & Risko, 2001, p. 596). Therefore, what should be written in the learning journal is not only on their experience in using language, but also what they expect from classroom activities. This is another challenge to face since some students still come to class with their instrumental motivation, to get a good grade. By writing learning journal, students are expected to re-ask themselves on why they attend the class and what they wish to achieve. Students, then, will be motivated more to recall their motivation and belief.

Hutton and Smith (1995) propose the nature and content of reflections: descriptive, dialogic, and critical reflection. Descriptive reflection refers to the well thought related to the desired purpose develop reasons for actions taken based on personal judgment. Dialogic reflection concerns conscious use of multiple perspectives

and exploration of alternative ways to solve problems, while critical reflection considers the social, political, and or cultural forces in which teaching enterprise is situated and their impact on classroom, community, and society (Kaplan, Rupley, Sparks, & Holcomb, 2007, p. 363).

Pollard (2002) argues that “in order for reflection to be effective, it has to be intentional and systematic” (LaPrade, Gilpatrick, & Perkins, 2014, p. 626). Thus, the students involved in this research were guided by some questions to help them reflect their thought and experience. The students’ learning journal involved in this research is categorized as personal reflection. This kind of reflection encourages the students to “examine motives related to their worldview, ethical behavior, and basic beliefs about who they are and what they want to become” (Phipps, 2005, p. 62). By doing so, the students are expected to find out higher motivation in learning as they recognize themselves as those who have certain goals in the class.

In English Letters Department, Sanata Dharma University, grammar is taught through Structure courses. The courses are ranged from Structure I until V, given from semesters I until V. Structure I and II courses are designed for the students to comprehend simple sentence patterns. Structure III contains the materials on sentence patterns appropriate to contexts, while Structure IV is about complex sentences. In Structure IV course, the students are expected to be able to analyze and produce complex sentences in various forms and purposes. Structure IV is a course for the fourth semester students whose prerequisite is Structure III. This course is seen as a difficult subject by students, measured from the number of students who repeat the course. Structure IV requires a C to pass. Otherwise, students have to repeat it in the following year.

In general, grammar classes in the Department are given traditionally. The lecturer presents the materials, gives exercises, and discusses the exercises with the students. To improve the students’ literacy in grammar class, the use of learning journal was applied. This method is selected as learning journal enables the students to reflect on what they have learned and applied. From the background presented in the previous paragraphs, this article attempts at presenting how the use of learning journal is related to the students’ literacy in grammar class. To figure out the previous purpose, there are two main problems to answer: (1) how do the students reflect their experience through online learning journal? and (2) how is the students’ literacy related to their learning journal?

B. Literature Review

Learning journal provides a space for students to express what they have learned in class. It also enables students to expand their ideas and link them to the original learning. Students are also given chance to relate their external experience to internal experience (Moon, 2006, p. 24). By assigning students to write their learning journal, it is expected that students have awareness that grammar learned in class must be applied in daily usage.

Learning journal is believed to engage students’ thinking through different cognitive processes such as prediction, brainstorming, reflection, and questioning (Al-rawahi & Al-balushi, 2015, p. 368). Reflection is also proposed as an important prerequisite for deep and meaningful learning and deep thinking learning (Ali & Byard,

2013). Learning journal is comprehended as an intentional reflective design strategy used to augment traditional face-to-face learning environment though its application can be done online. Henderson & Monteiro (2004) mention that online learning journal adds another dimension to it by promoting communication, creation of meaning and multiple dialogues, enhancing the development of insight, and promoting cognitive awareness and critical thinking (Le & Le, 2007, p. 1). Therefore, this article involved online social media, as a place for the students to write their learning journal.

Learning journal has some purposes: to record experience, to facilitate learning from experience, to support understanding and the representation of understanding, and to develop critical thinking (Moon, 2006, p. 44). The previous purposes are covered in reflection. Students can share not only what they comprehend in class, but also what they do not get during the teaching learning process. Students can also exercise their literacy as they practice writing their thought in the form of sentences though they may not be aware that they actually practice their literacy.

Dealing with students' learning journal is not only reading their sentences, but it also figuring the students' way of thinking. What they write in the learning journal displays their reflection which is

also likely to involve a conscious and stated purpose for the reflection, with an outcome specified in terms of learning, action or clarification. It may be preceded by a description of the purpose and/or the subject matter of the reflection. All of these factors can influence its nature and quality (Moon, 2006, pp. 37–38).

The quotation above emphasizes that students' consciousness in learning can be measured from their language use in the reflection. However, this article does not only present the students' consciousness, but other ways of doing, saying, behaving, or being. The previous kinds of actions and states are further discussed by means of Halliday's functional grammar.

Functional grammar sees language in the form of metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. It talks about "language being seen as a massive network of interlocking systems of choice: that is, being Systemic, and Functional as being meaning centered" (Briones 2016, 110). Language use is realized through the three metafunctions: experiential or ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. However, this article focuses on seeing language use in the students' learning journal from the ideational function. It is the function "that the speaker or writer embodies language in his experience of the phenomena of the real world, which also includes the language user's experience of the internal world of his consciousness through his reactions, cognitions, and perceptions, and also his linguistic acts of speaking and understanding (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 170). The verb used in a clause will bring into its different processes: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, existential.

To analyze the process found in the clause, the term used in systemic functional grammar (SFG) is transitivity analysis. It observes the verb in the clause which brings to its types and participants. The table below displays the summary of the six processes along with their participants and meanings (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 291)

Table: 1 Summary of Transitivity

Process	Participants	Meanings
Material	Actor, Goal	Doing, happening
Behavioral	Behaver	Behaving
Mental	Senser, Phenomenon	Feeling, thinking
Verbal	Sayer, Receiver	Saying
Relational	Carrier, Attribute	Being
	Token, Value	
Existential	Existent	Exist

The material process is marked by the verbs related to dynamic activities, such as *study*, *improve* and *enrich*. Those verbs are done by the Actor, while the objects done are called the Goal. The behavioral process is the process of behaving, such as *look at* and *smile*. The participant doing the action is called Behaver. The mental process is related to perceptive, emotive, desiderative, and cognitive. The verbs like *think*, *want*, and *know* mark the process. Senser is the participant who feels, while Phenomenon is what is felt. The verbal process is related to the action *saying*, thus the verbs like *assert* and *mention* mark the process. Sayer is the one who says, while Receiver is the participant who listens to the *saying*. The relational process brings the meaning of *being*. Carrier and Attribute are the participants of attributive relational process. The second type of participants in the relational process are Token and Value. They are categorized as identifying relational process. Token is what is identified, while Value is what defines. The existential process is marked by *there* and *it* as they mark the existence of the participant.

Previous studies on learning journal have been exercised by previous scholars. The use of online learning journal, among other types of learning journal, is able to improve the students' communicative interaction as the online sites have a multicultural dimension which is often absent in face-to-face communication (Le & Le, 2007). As learning journal is a form of reflection, teacher's reflective teaching also interests scholars. Minott (2011) finds out that reflective teaching had positive effects on most students' general knowledge of reflective teaching. The students also develop their self-knowledge and awareness. The students were also motivated to apply what they learned in classroom to outside classroom activities (Minott, 2011).

The use of online media in learning journal was also applied by Pedro, Abodeeb-Gentile & Courtney (2012). The students' writing reflects different range of literacy: from practical to critical reflection. The students mostly used clarifying and providing evidence strategies in their writing (Pedro, Abodeeb-Gentile, & Courtney, 2012). Learning journal is also exercised to improve the students' self-regulated learning strategies. The use of learning journal supports the students self-regulated strategies if it is structured around self-reflections in terms of learning goals, learning strategies, observations, understanding, feeling, and dialogues with oneself and others (Al-rawahi & Al-balushi, 2015).

Analyzing texts related to education context is commonly found in recent research. Briones suggests to employ functional linguistics in text analysis. The research observed two different texts by observing both interpersonal and experiential metafunctions. Broines concludes that language can be employed to create a

relationship between the text writers and the readers. Different language choice in the texts reveal that the writers show either approval or disapproval, acceptance or rejection, certainty or uncertainty etc (Briones 2016, 140). It is also suggested that systemic functional linguistics be used to find deeper appreciation of "how written language is framed".

Discourse analysis in teaching and learning context is done by CHEW (2016). The observed phenomena deal with religious mentoring and socialization by means of ethnography of speaking, conversation analysis, and discourse analysis. The research figures out that particular language choice like code-switching, humor, and mock demonstration are used by the senior peers to the mentees (CHEW 2016). The analysis reveals that particular discourse strategies are used to build identity and solidarity in a religious community (CHEW 2016, 241). The language use in the religious camp and traditional Muslim group does not have significant differences in linguistic and discursal strategies (CHEW 2016, 242).

The review of theories above gives the researcher background to comprehend the nature of learning journal and how language use by the students can show their reflection. The researcher also relates the kinds of language choice in learning journal and the students' final grade. It is necessary to link since language is the resource of meaning. Thus, the students' learning journal can be comprehended more thoroughly and assumption is avoided.

C. Research Methodology

There are three sub-parts of research methodology used in this article defined below.

1. Participants / Subject / Population and Sample

The participants were the fourth semester students of English Letters Department, Sanata Dharma University. There were 37 students in Structure IV course, which became the class to observe. The students were assigned to write their learning journal online, given in the end of the topic. Edmodo, a social media for learning, was chosen as the medium for the students to post their learning journal. There were five topics during the semester. The students' reflection was then described to figure out how they reflect their experience of learning and using grammar. Therefore, it can be obviously seen whether their literacy in grammar class improved or not. This article used simple random sampling method to collect the data. There were students from a class chosen as the participants as there was no bias in the choice (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001, p. 91).

2. Instruments

There were two kinds of instruments used to reach the objectives of this article. The first instrument was in the form of students' learning journal. To help the students write their learning journal, some reflective questions were posted in the end of each topic during the semester. There were five topics discussed: reduced clause, passive, cleft, inversion, and noun clause. The students were assigned to write their learning journal in Edmodo. The questions given were: a) what is the benefit of learning this material for you? (b) what values can you find from learning this material? (c) what will you do with your knowledge gained in this lesson? And (d) what benefit can you find from learning this material? The second instrument was the students' final grade. The

final grade is taken from four kinds of assessments: weekly assignment, progress test 1, progress test 2, and final test. Each gave 25% of the students' final mark.

3. Data Analysis

The students' learning journal was analyzed by means of transitivity analysis. It analyzes the clauses written in the journal by paying attention to the lexical choice. Transitivity takes the verb to categorize the clause into its type as the presence of certain verb affect the other participants or constituents in the clause. Transitivity is defined as the "resource for interpreting and expressing events, happenings, goings-on, mental states, sayings, behaviors, and relations of different kinds" (Emilia, Moecharam and Syifa 2017, 209). Halliday's Functional Grammar was applied to categorize the clause into its type. From the category, the pattern of students' deeper understanding of their learning journal could be figured out. Therefore, the relation between the students' learning journal and their achievement in class could be concluded.

D. Findings

The first problem to answer in this article is to know how the students reflect their experience through online learning journal. From the research, the students use similar lexical choice in the five journals assigned during the semester. The table below displays the lexical choice along with its process.

Table: 2 Lexical Choice in the Students' Learning Journal

Process	Examples
Material	distinguish, use, learn, make, communicate, improve, differentiate, recognize, modify, improve, define, compose, give, learn, change, vary, write, deliver, compare, practice, restate, describe, paraphrase, emphasize
Mental	understand, know
Relational	being creative, aware, careful

Students' reflection above depicted that the most of the students used material verbs when writing their learning journal. The existence of mental and relational processes also appears in the learning journal though not many.

To measure the students' achievement, the chart below summarizes the students' grade given in the end of the semester.

Table: 3 Students' Achievement in the end of the Semester

Students' Grade	Number	Percentage
A	12	33.33%
B	11	30.56%
C	9	25%
D	3	8.33%
E	1	2.78%

The table above shows that most of the students got an A in the end of the semester, presented in 33.3%. The second dominating grade is a B, achieved by 30.56% of the students. A quarter of all students got a C, while a D was achieved by 8.33% of the students. An E was achieved by one student, presented in 2.78%. Those who got a D

and an E must repeat the same course in the following year as they failed to pass the course.

E. Discussion

From the findings of the students' lexical choice in their learning journal, it can be inferred that most of the students have intention to practice their knowledge. The use of material verb marks the action done by the Actor referring to the students. Below are the examples of students' learning journal.

- (1) I can **identify** and know how to make sentences effectively by reducing it.
- (2) I will **use** it in practicing my writing ability.
- (3) I can **apply** and **analyze** the types of sentence in many sources/media such as newspaper, magazines, etc.

The verbs above, *identify*, *use*, *apply*, *analyze*, are categorized as dynamic verbs which signals the doing. The students, represented by *I* perform as the Actor in the clause. It is the participant who does the action. The Goal in clause (1) is presented in the form of a noun clause (NC) which refer to the manner they apply grammar knowledge. In clause (2), the Goal is *it*, which also refers to the grammar knowledge gained in class. The similar Goal also appears in clause (3) which is in the form of a noun phrase (NP), referring to rich sources they find outside classroom.

The students' learning journal written in material verbs above signify that the students are aware of the importance of their literacy. The literacy they should master is applied in their life as social practice. In their life, students also find sources which are easy to find. The students, in this stage, start to develop their critical literacy as they see media as sources to criticize, no longer sources to read only. This fact is in line with the students' achievement in the end of the class. When the students perform what they expect, they sharpen their understanding of the materials. Indirectly, their grammar knowledge is understood better.

Other examples of students' learning journal written in material process are below.

- (4) By learning noun clause, I can **make** good sentences with different language style.
- (5) I can **use** English sentences more various when I write my paper, thesis or another writing.
- (6) We can **modify** one sentence into some different sentences but still have the same meaning by learning noun clause so that my writing won't be boring.

The material process above is marked by the verbs *make*, *use* and *modify*. The Actors in those clauses refer to the students. The similar referents of the Goal appear there. In journal (4), the Goal is in the form of an NP, *good sentences*, while the prepositional phrase (PP), *with different language style* is the circumstance of manner. The Goal in journal 5 is in the form of an NP, *English sentences*, followed by circumstance of time in the form of an adverbial clause. In journal (6), the student also put similar Goal referring to the sentence they make. A circumstance of purpose appears in journal 6 shown in the form of adverbial clause.

From students' learning journal 4 to 6, the students used material process portraying their achievement after learning the materials in classroom. What is interesting here is students also show their purpose why they apply their grammar

knowledge. Students are not only aware of the importance of grammar in their literacy, but also conduct certain actions to reach the goals they set. This fact brings good point to the students as they also, indirectly, recall the materials taught in class into practice. The main issue is the connection between conscious understanding of a rule and the ability to use it (Cook, 2008, p. 40). Thus, the students have proven that their literacy is integrated to their life.

Another process found in the students' learning journal is mental, process of feeling and thinking. Below are the examples.

- (7) I can more **understand** the use of many kinds of sentences that might be found in the real life.
- (8) After I learn noun clause, I **know** about another English's type of sentence
- (9) From learning noun clause, I **know** more about English structure and how to apply it in my study.

In the clauses above, the mental verbs are presented by *understand* and *know*. Those two verbs are categorized into cognitive verbs, referring to the speaker's thought. The Seners in the clauses above refer to the students, presented by *I*. The Phenomenon is the participant which is thought. In clause (7), the Phenomenon is presented in the form of an NP referring to the material learned in class. In clause (8) and (9), the Phenomenon refer to the patterns of English sentences the students learn in class.

The above clauses show that students recall the materials given in the class. The employment of mental process signals that students proceed their cognitive aspect when learning grammar. They are aware of the importance of the materials given in the class. The existence of Phenomenon referring to the materials emphasizes that the students know the necessity of accuracy in grammar. The issue of accuracy is important in grammar class as it can bring different meanings when the students, for example, forgot to use the correct tense or punctuation. The students should "know" language in an unconscious sense so that they can put it to good use (Cook, 2008, p. 37).

The other process appears in the students' learning journal is relational, the process of being. Below are the examples.

- (10) I **become** more aware and thorough in finding which part contains noun clause and what by learning noun clause.
- (11) I **am** aware that actually there are types or varieties of sentence.
- (12) I **become** more aware of the difference between noun clause and the other clause.

The relational process in the above clauses is marked by Verb to-be and Linking Verb, *become*. Those verbs mark the process of being. The relational process above is categorized as identifying. The students, presented by *I* are categorized as Token. Token is the participant which is identified. The other participant is Value, referring to the participant which identifies. The Value in the above clauses is in the form of adjective, *aware*.

Relating the students' achievement in the end of the semester to their learning journal, it can be inferred that students are aware of grammar. Students have related their internal and external experience so that they exercise their cognitive awareness (Le & Le, 2007) and develop their understanding and critical thinking (Moon, 2006). Students often think texts "generate meaning in a single, albeit complex, way (Wilson,

2014, p. 71). However, when they put it in practice, they will be accustomed to use different styles of sentences in appropriate use.

The students' learning journal analyzed in this article proves that students can record experience and support their understanding of the materials (Moon, 2006, p. 44). In the journal, students use mental and relational processes to refer to their understanding of the materials. On the other hand, the material process is used when the students express their experience, practice, and purpose of learning grammar. When students are aware of the importance of grammar practice, their understanding of the materials can improve, shown by the students' achievement in the end of the semester.

The finding also supports the claim that learning journal involves a conscious and stated purpose for the reflection, with an outcome specified in terms of learning, action or clarification (Moon, 2006, pp. 37–38). Learning journal helps the students produce their language performance, referring to the interaction when speaking and listening in which the learner engage is viewed as an integral and mutually influential whole such as in everyday communication (Arnold, 2004, p. 22). The finding adds the previous notion that students also regard writing and reading as the skills integrated to their life.

Analyzing language use in the students' learning journal proves that language analysis is a delicate data in teaching-learning practice. Burke mentions that "It is through language that we identify our assumptions, state our intentions, and come to our world" (Webb, 2000, p. 231). From the students' reflection, there are two main issues proposed by the students: their experience shared in classroom and their goal set after attending the class. In sum, reflection is found as the method for "describing and reconstructing events" (Webb, 2000, p. 233).

F. Conclusion

The use of learning journal is proven to motivate the students reflect on what they have gained in class. The students find out that grammar taught in class can give them awareness of the importance of grammar in their language performance. By reflecting their experience, the students also found out that the topics given in the class help them improve their language literacy. In using language, they have to be careful and creative so that their utterance will vary. The students also have intention to practice their literacy in other classes such as Speaking and Writing. When students regularly write their learning journal in the provided social media, Edmodo, they show their literacy improvement. It proves that learning journal is able to motivate the students practice their knowledge from classroom to outside classroom.

Further research observing students' learning journal is suggested by evaluating students' language use adopting the theory of Appraisal Analysis. The future research can figure out how the students put themselves in relation to the teaching learning process. They can show their affect, judgment, or appreciation. The studies will, therefore, enrich the analysis of linguistics as well as second language teaching. Future research can also compare the students' achievement in different classes by means of control group and experiment group. By doing so, the relation between the use of learning journal in one group can be observed more thoroughly compared to the other group. The employment of quantitative research is also possible to involve.

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