Language Functions Analysis in Seventh Grade Student English Textbook

Zildjian Afa
zildjian1407@gmail.com

Mansyur Srisudarso
mansyur.srisudarso@staff.unsika.ac.id

Putri Kamalia Hakim
putrikamalia@gmail.com

Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang

ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to analyze the use of language functions of the conversation text found in *When English Rings a Bell* textbook. To achieve this purpose, the conversation texts in the textbook are carefully analyze through Halliday's (1975) language function model. The results reveal that the conversation texts in the textbook is lacking some of the language functions. In regard with this, some implications were proposed.

Keyword: Language Functions; Textbook Analysis; When English Rings a Bell

INTRODUCTION

Textbook holds an important role in regards of understanding learning materials, especially for students (Mukundan, et al., 2011). Within the field of language teaching and learning in general, textbook has been a common media or teaching tools to further support the process of learning. Weninger (2020) states that textbooks play a major role in language teaching and many variety of subjects.

Most of the time, selecting a proper and appropriate textbook has not been an easy task. Albeit all of that, Indonesian government has been actively putting effort in providing support in the educational field. Through *Permendikbud No. 71 Tahun 2013*, The Ministry of Education and Culture has been providing an English textbook on the basis of the current curriculum in Indonesia. One of the English textbook provided is for the seventh grade, titled *When English Rings a Bell*.

However, as textbook is the second most crucial factor of language teaching and learning after the teacher, especially in second or foreign language classroom (Riazi, 2003), it is important to investigate the textbook as whether it fulfill the needs of language teaching and learning or not. Vellenga (2004) conducted a research in which the results show that the amount of information presented in the textbook of EFL and ESL are not sufficient in order to become pragmatically

efficient. Another research was conducted by Soozandehfar (2011) which specifically investigated the conversation sections of *Top-Notch Series* textbooks with the basis of Halliday's (1978) language functions and Searle's (1976) speech acts model. The results of Soozandehfar (2011) research also indicated the textbooks are not pragmatically efficient. Furthermore, Halliday (1975) claims that in order for a conversation to be considered good, it should consist of all types of language functions, and textbooks are expected to provide the learner with sufficient information regarding the language functions, authentically and reliably as samples of real-life communication. Based on the aforementioned issue above, the pragmatically inefficient textbooks share a similar major problem, in which the information provided by the textbooks are insufficient to cover all of the language functions (and in some case, the speech acts). In regard with the background above, these problems are formulated as follows: 1) What are the types of language functions in the conversation texts found in ―*When English Rings a Bell?"*, 2) How frequently each language function is used in the conversation texts found in *"When English Rings a Bell"*?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language functions according to Halliday (1975) are the seven functions of a language for children in their early years. This claim is in line with Halliday (1975) theory that language serves certain function for children which in turn motivated children to acquire that said language. The seven language functions are further divided into two categories according to the functions. The first four language functions serve the purpose of fulfilling the physical, emotional, and social needs of the children, namely instrumental, regulatory, interactional, and personal functions (Halliday, 1975). The other three functions serve the purpose of helping children to terms with their environment, namely heuristic, imaginative, and representational functions. Instrumental function of a language serves as the expression of needs. There is however a tendency when the meaning of instrumental expression refers to the general meaning—where the object desired is clear within the context—and the more specific meaning. Example: the expression *"I want that"*. Regulatory function of language purpose is to issues order—to tell other of what to do. This function also express control over the behavior of others. Example: *"go away", "do as I tell you"*. Interactional function of language serves to establish and maintain contact of those that matter. Interactional function can also be seen as the communicative use of language. Example: the expressions vary from a simple *"greeting"* to a more complex expression initiating a conversation. Personal function functions as a mean of self-awareness and express individuality. Example: *"here I come"*. Heuristic function serves the purpose of fulfilling curiosity; it refers to language as an instrument for learning about reality. Example: *"why is that?"*. Imaginative functions of language can be referred as the ability to evoke mental image. Imaginative function is the capability of using language to visualize image or scenes in mind. To put it simply, to convey thought into words. Example: *"let"s pretend"*. Representational function refers to the ability of using language to refer

to things, people, and events. It is the ability to establish connection between objects. Example: *"I"ll tell you"*.

Halliday (1975) states that the absent of one of the language functions should be considered as serious concern, as it would affect the development of children language acquisition, which in turn affect the adult language acquisition as the adult language is the transition from children language. In 2004, Vellenga conducted a research in the topic of comparing ESL and EFL textbooks material in regard of pragmatically efficiency of the textbooks. The result showed that in term of pragmatic efficiency, the textbooks are lacking the material needed, therefore the textbooks are considered pragmatically inefficient. Following this finding, another research was conducted by Seyyed Mohammad Ali Soozandehfar and Rahman Sahragard (2011) which discussed the topic of Evaluation of Speech Acts and Language Functions in *Top-Notch Series*. The research analyzed a total of 14 conversation sections from all 14 unit of the books from the *Top-Notch Series*, all of the 14 conversation sections were selected randomly to ensure the variety of conversation samples. Each one from the 14 conversations were taken from each units, which contains ―social context‖ and ranging from 4 to 15 sentences, with each sentences includes an average of 7 words. To conduct the research, two pragmatic models of Searle's (1976) speech acts and Halliday's (1978) language functions were used. The results of the research show that throughout the 14 conversations of the 14 unit of the books, the various types of speech acts and language functions were not equally distributed, which indicated the conversations included in the textbook are not pragmatically efficient and functional. Another previous research was conducted by Yasaman Bagherpour and Behzad Barkat (2017) titled A Pragmatic Analysis of Speech Acts and Language Functions: The case of *English Result Series*. Similarly with the research conducted by Soozandehfar and Sahragard (2011), this research was attempted to analyze the conversation sections of *English Result Series* through the pragmatic dimension of speech acts and language functions. The two pragmatic models of Halliday's (1975) language functions and Searle's (1976) speech acts were applied to analyze all conversation sections from elementary, intermediate, pre-intermediate, and upper-intermediate levels of *English Result Series* books. The results of the research indicated throughout the distribution of both language functions and speech acts in all four levels of the English Result Series are not pragmatically efficient and considered as weak textbook in regards to language functions and speech acts types applied in the books.

METHOD

Research Design

Document analysis is used as research design in this research. Document analysis is a research design in which the author interprets documents and gives the documents voice and meaning in certain topic (Bowen, 2009). According to (Corbin & Strauss, 2012), document analysis requires the data of the document to be

examined and interpreted to gain understanding, elicit meaning and develop empirical knowledge. The document analysis is used to review or evaluated documents systematically, be it printed document or electronic document (computer-based and internet-transmitted). This research specifically uses document analysis to analyze the language functions found in conversations text of seventh grade English Textbook *When English Rings a Bell*.

Material

The material for analysis is English student textbook *When English Rings a Bell* developed by *Indonesia Ministry of Education and Culture*, developed to be used by seventh grade students.

Data Collection Procedure

The data for this research are taken from the conversation texts found in *When English Rings a Bell* textbook. In order to gain understanding of the use of language functions of the book, the conversation texts of the book are examined.

Furthermore, to ensure the variety of language functions found in the book, the sample are selected through the criterion of different topical contexts or themes as the main consideration. Though, to cover the advice of analyzing a minimum of 10% sample of the whole population in qualitative research, all of the conversation texts in the book are examined and analyzed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis of this research is mainly qualitative, therefore the analysis of the entire data of this research is carried through careful examination of the conversation texts presented in the *When English Rings a Bell* textbook using Halliday's (1975) language functions models as the basis. The observation is aimed to find and describe the various language functions used in the contents of the conversation texts of the book. The only quantitative analysis performed in this study is to show simple statistical frequencies and occurrences of each type of language function.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Through careful analysis and examination of the English textbook ―*When English Rings a Bell*‖ the following data of the frequency of language functions occurrences are acquired.

Table 1. Frequencies and percentages of language functions in „When English Rings a Bell‟

Functions	Frequency	Percentage
Instrumental	18	3.629%

Regulatory	29	5.846%
Interactional	146	29.43%
Personal	70	14.11%
Heuristic	71	14.31%
Imaginative	3	0.604%
Representational	159	32.05%
Total	496	

The table above shows the representation of the occurrences of different type of language functions in all the conversation texts of the English textbook ―*When English Rings a Bell*‖. The percentage reveals that 3.629% refers to instrumental function, 5.846% refers to regulatory function, 29.43% refers to interactional function, 14.11% refers to personal function, 14.31% refers to heuristic function, 0.604% refers to imaginative function, 32.05% refers to representational function. Therefore, based on the table above, it can be concluded that imaginative function (0.604%) has the least occurrences in all of the conversation texts found in the textbook, whereas representational function (32.05%) has the most occurrences in all of the conversation texts found in the textbook.

The finding reveals that various type of language functions has been used in all conversation texts found in the student English textbook ―*When English Rings a Bell*‖ for seventh grade. The result also shows the frequency in which each of the language function used vary from one type to another with the most used function is representational function followed by interactional function, while the least used of language function is imaginative function.

Most finding from analyzing the conversation texts in the textbook revealed that the text frequently used representational function to relay information in conjunction with the use of heuristic function to discover and elicit the information. While the interactional function and personal function are often used in between of other language function as a complementary. Based on the finding, it can be implied that the use of representational function (32.05%), heuristic function (14.31%), interactional function (29.43%) and personal function (14.11%) in the textbook is already sufficient to provide reliable samples of real-life usage of these type of language function. However, the use of the other three language functions, namely instrumental function (3.629%), regulatory function (5.846%), and imaginative function (0.604%) in the textbook is lacking.

The variety of the number of occurrences of each type of the language functions might be caused by how the conversation texts found in the book are organized. Most of the conversation texts found in the book are organized to deliver information to students, therefore the use of both heuristic and representational functions are needed, resulting in higher number of occurrences. Another form of conversation texts found in the book are organized to simulate a real-life interaction between people, hence the interactional and personal functions were used. Additionally, the limitation of the topic or theme of the conversations might hinder

the author of the book to provide the sufficient sample of another language functions, namely instrumental function, regulatory function, and imaginative function.

Furthermore, to answer the first and second question of this research, the results showed that all of the type of language functions has been used in all conversation texts found in the textbook. However, the number of occurrences of the use of each type of language function showed a huge gap between the most used function and the least used function. As Halliday (1975) stated that textbooks are supposed to be able to provide learners with sufficient, reliable and authentic samples of real-life communication, the lack of one or other language functions should be taken seriously.

The lack of imaginative function found in the textbook shows that the imaginative function is nearly absent and almost neglected. This is in line with similar research that has been conducted before by Soozandehfar (2011) on the study of *Top Notch Series* and Bagherpour (2017) on the study of *English Result Series* English textbook, in which the imaginative function of language is neglected.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the result of language functions found in the conversation texts of English textbook —*When English Rings a Bell*‖, and in line with the purpose of this study. It can be concluded that the English textbook —*When English Rings a Bell*‖ reveals the various usage of all of Halliday's (1975) language functions model throughout all of the conversation texts found in the textbook.

However, in harmony with previous research on the similar topic, Soozandehfar (2011) and Bagherpour (2017) showed a similarly same issue, in which the use of imaginative function of the language is neglected. While the English textbook —*When English Rings a Bell*‖ did not completely neglect the use of imaginative function, the occurrences of the imaginative function of 0.604% or 3 items was considered lacking, compared to the use of other language functions. This issue should be handled seriously, in line with Halliday (1975) claims that language serves certain function for children which in turn motivated children to acquire that said language. The lack of one or other function of language might affect children (in this case students) motivation in acquiring the language, which in turn indirectly affects adult language acquisition, because adult language acquisition is a transition of children language acquisition (Halliday, 1975).

With consideration to the conclusion above, the following suggestions and ideas are expected to be taken into account regarding the language functions taught to students: First, considering a good amount of some language functions provided in the English textbook —*When English Rings a Bell*‖, teachers are advised to focus on providing another samples of other language functions which the textbook is lacking. Secondly, the textbook already provided sufficient amount of language

functions usage theoretically. To balance this out, teachers are advised to be able to simulate the real-life samples of the language functions provided by the textbook with different context from the book. Last, teachers are advised to motivate students to be able to use various expression from various language functions to convey their thought, to communicate, to learn, and to express themselves through the use of language, be it written or verbally.

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