

# Meaning Construction through Simile-Driven Transitivity in *The Rainbow Troops*

Rini Yuliana<sup>1</sup>, Novita Siswayanti<sup>2</sup>, Jarwadi<sup>2</sup>, Tatang Subagyo<sup>2</sup>, Suci Paresti<sup>2</sup>, Slamet Wibowo<sup>2</sup>, Budiana Setiawan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> National Research and Innovation Agency- BRIN, Indonesia

Correspondence: Rini Yuliana, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia.

Received: January 2, 2026

Accepted: March 25, 2026

Online Published: May 20, 2026

doi:10.5430/wjel.v16n5p143

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v16n5p143>

## Abstract

This study examines how simile clauses in the novel construct meaning through transitivity analysis within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Rather than proposing a new theoretical model, the study applies transitivity systematically to explore how simile functions as a linguistic resource for representing experiential meaning and cultural values. The data consist of 153 simile clauses identified in the novel and analyzed qualitatively using transitivity processes, participant roles, and clause patterns. The findings show that simile clauses frequently employ material, mental, and relational processes to construct meanings related to perseverance, spirituality, and social solidarity. These findings demonstrate the analytical potential of transitivity for interpreting figurative language in literary texts, particularly in the context of Indonesian cultural values.

**Keywords:** Simile clauses, Transitivity, Meaning construction, Systemic Functional Linguistics, English Literary Text

## 1. Introduction

Literary texts function not only as aesthetic and cultural artefacts but also as powerful literary and linguistic resources that shape social and cultural understanding. Through narrative representation and linguistic choices, literature enables readers to engage with interpretive and cultural meanings in ways that extend beyond formal instruction. *The Rainbow Troops* exemplifies this transformative potential. The novel narrates the experiences of ten students attending the poorest village school on the island of Belitong, where completing primary education is considered an exceptional achievement. When the school faces closure due to bureaucratic pressure, the students, known as *the Rainbow Troops*, together with two dedicated teachers, resist institutional neglect and social marginalisation. Beyond its narrative of perseverance, social justice, and educational resilience, *The Rainbow Troops* has gained international recognition, having been translated into forty foreign languages. Andrea Hirata received the Buch Awards in Germany in 2013, and the novel continues to be celebrated as an inspiring and emotionally resonant literary work (Yuliana, 2025).

While the educational potential of literature lies in its narrative content, it is ultimately realised through language. Within literary contexts, texts provide linguistic and ideological spaces in which cultural, moral, and social meanings are negotiated and constructed through language. Figurative language, particularly simile, plays a central role in this process by intensifying imagery, deepening reader engagement, and reinforcing the construction of experiential and cultural meanings. The linguistic choices made by authors as realised in English literary texts shape readers' interpretive responses, allowing literature to function as a medium for meaning-making and literary engagement (Brooks et al., 2021). Among various figurative devices, simile clauses operate as comparative structures that not only enhance narrative meaning but also reveal underlying systems of belief and value embedded within literary texts.

To examine how such meanings are grammatically realised, a functional linguistic perspective is required. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), specifically the transitivity system proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), offers a robust framework for analysing how experiential meanings are realised through grammatical structures. Transitivity analysis enables researchers to investigate how processes, participants, and circumstances construct social and ideological meanings in texts. This framework has been widely applied in literary studies encompassing poetry, novels, short stories, children's literature, and political discourse (Alaei & Ahangari, 2016; Darani, 2014; Rajendra, 2020; Ogunmuyiwa & Antia, 2020). However, existing research predominantly focuses on simplex clauses, stylistic appreciation, or ideological representation, with limited attention paid to figurative constructions operating within complex clause systems, particularly in English literary texts.

Although figurative language has attracted increasing scholarly attention, its grammatical functioning remains underexplored. Recent scholarship has acknowledged the role of figurative language in shaping readers' emotional and interpretive responses (Wibisono & Widodo, 2019; Sadeq, 2019). Nevertheless, most studies approach figures of speech from stylistic or rhetorical perspectives rather than examining their grammatical realisation through transitivity choices in complex clause structures. In the Indonesian context, Yuliana et al. (2025) analysed transitivity patterns in personification clauses in *Laskar Pelangi*, highlighting their relevance for literary meaning construction. However, this study did not examine simile clauses nor did it focus on meaning construction as realised in English literary

texts. Earlier studies on figurative language in Indonesian literature (Yuliana, 2018; 2019) similarly focused on stylistic features without linking transitivity patterns to value-oriented meaning-making. As a result, the role of simile clauses embedded in complex structures as carriers of experiential and interpretive meaning in English literary texts remains insufficiently theorised.

Previous studies have examined figurative language in literary texts; however, relatively limited attention has been given to the systematic analysis of simile clauses using the transitivity system within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly in the context of Indonesian literary works. Several studies focus primarily on metaphor and symbolism, while simile is often discussed only descriptively rather than analysed as a clause-level meaning-making resource. Therefore, this study aims to examine how simile clauses construct meaning through transitivity analysis in the selected novel. This study does not attempt to extend Halliday's theoretical model. Instead, it applies the transitivity system systematically to demonstrate how simile can function as a linguistic resource for meaning construction in literary discourse.

Despite growing interest in figurative language, several gaps remain in the study of simile clauses in literary texts. First, research on simile clauses embedded in paratactic and hypotactic complex structures is limited, with most studies focusing on simple or standalone clauses. Second, the connection between simile-level transitivity choices and the construction of cultural and moral meanings has not been systematically examined, leaving an incomplete understanding of how grammatical structures mediate value-oriented interpretation in English literary text. Third, there is a paucity of studies integrating SFL-based grammatical analysis with broader literary interpretive frameworks, particularly in the context of popular Indonesian literature as accessed through English literary texts. Finally, while *The Rainbow Troops* has received considerable attention for its narrative and cultural significance, its linguistic patterns, especially simile-driven transitivity in the English version, remain underexplored, limiting insights into how language shapes moral and cultural meaning-making.

To address these gaps, this study investigates how simile clauses embedded in paratactic and hypotactic complex structures realise transitivity patterns that mediate cultural and moral meanings of *The Rainbow Troops*. The study adopts a systemic functional linguistic perspective to analyse grammatical choices, focusing on how processes, participants, and circumstances contribute to the construction of meaning in English literary texts. By integrating simile-driven transitivity analysis with literary interpretation, the study provides a theoretical contribution to understanding the grammatical mediation of values in literary text and demonstrates the potential of SFL-based analysis as a tool for literary meaning-making and interpretive engagement.

More specifically, this study reconceptualises simile not merely as a stylistic device but as a functional grammatical resource, showing how simile clauses embedded in paratactic and hypotactic complex structures realise transitivity patterns that mediate cultural and moral meanings in English literary texts. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do simile clauses embedded in paratactic and hypotactic complex structures realise transitivity patterns of *The Rainbow Troops*?
2. How do these simile-driven transitivity patterns function to mediate cultural and moral meanings in English literary text?
3. What implications for literary interpretation and discourse analysis do simile-based transitivity patterns offer in understanding cultural and moral meaning construction in English literary texts?

This study contributes theoretically by elaborating the grammatical behaviour of simile clauses within complex structures in English literary text and practically by demonstrating how linguistic aesthetics can be mobilised as a resource for literary meaning-making and interpretive engagement.

## 2. Literature Review

A literature review surveys books, scholarly articles, and any other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory, and by so doing, provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works in relation to the research problem being investigated. It aims to identify gaps in existing research, highlight trends and patterns, and establish a framework for the current study by situating it within the broader academic discourse.

### 2.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics and Transitivity

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) provides a comprehensive framework for examining how language constructs meaning through grammatical choices. Central to SFL is the view that the clause is the primary unit of meaning, simultaneously realising the textual, interpersonal, and experiential metafunctions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 211–212). Textually, clauses organize discourse through Theme-Rheme progression; interpersonally, they enact social relations as propositions or proposals; and experientially, they construe human experience through configurations of processes, participants, and circumstances as realised in discourse, including literary texts written in English.

Within the experiential metafunction, the transitivity system explains how experience is linguistically represented. Processes are categorized into six main types: material, behavioural, mental, verbal, relational, and existential, each associated with specific participant roles such as Actor, Senser, Sayer, Carrier, Token, and Existent (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 173). Circumstantial elements, realised through adverbial or prepositional phrases, further specify experiential meaning across time, place, manner, cause, and condition. As Eggins (2004, p. 213) emphasizes, grammatical choices within transitivity reflect how writers construe events, relations, and states of

being, mediating meaning construction in discourse. Illustrative examples include: “Diana gave blood” (material), “Diana thought” (mental), and “There is a reward” (existential).

Experiential meaning in SFL is not confined to isolated clauses but is realized and extended through clause complexing. A clause complex consists of two or more logically related clauses containing more than one main process (Wiratno, 2018, p. 132). In SFL, the term clause replaces the traditional notion of sentence, emphasizing meaning-making rather than formal segmentation. Clause complexes are organized through relations of interdependency, known as taxis, which distinguish between paratactic relations (equal status) and hypotactic relations (dependent status) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 373; Wiratno, 2018, p. 135). Interdependency denotes the mutual dependence of clauses within a complex, typically marked by coordinating or subordinating conjunctions.

Paratactic clause complexes are signaled by numbers (1, 2, 3...) and are linked with coordinating conjunctions such as *and*, *or*, *but* or punctuation such as commas and semicolons. For example:

1. *Time has passed, and the opportunity will not come again.*
2. *The prices of goods keep rising, but people's purchasing power does not increase.*
3. *Do you cook the food yourself, or do you buy it?*

Each clause in these examples can stand independently as a simplex clause, indicating paratactic equality. In contrast, hypotactic clause complexes involve structural dependency, where one clause functions as the head clause ( $\alpha$ ) and the others as dependent clauses ( $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ ...). This dependency is typically marked by subordinating conjunctions (e.g., *because*, *although*, *when*, *so that*) or relative pronouns (e.g., *who*, *which*, *that*). Examples include:

1. *The exam questions were very difficult, so that many students failed.*
2. *Although the surface appears dry, there is a considerable amount of water at a certain depth below.*
3. *Rocks in the desert break into pieces because the temperature changes drastically.*

In these constructions, the dependent clauses cannot function independently, deriving their meaning from the head clause, exemplifying the unequal or dependent status characteristic of hypotactic relations.

Beyond interdependency, clause complexes are characterized by logico-semantic relations, which express functional relationships between clauses (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Wiratno, 2018; Santosa, 2003). These include:

1. Expansion–extension (+): adds, contrasts, or presents alternative meaning. Example: *They played very well, and pleased the press.*
2. Expansion–enhancement ( $\times$ ): qualifies meaning via time, cause, or condition. Example: *After having dinner, they went out.*
3. Expansion–elaboration (=): restates or specifies meaning. Example: *They played very well; they are a good team.*
4. Projection: represents speech or thought. Example: *They said, “We will win the match.”* (verbal); *They think that it was a complicated case.* (mental)

In literary text, these clause complex relations play a crucial role in shaping how experiential meaning unfolds. Paratactic relations tend to accumulate experiential content and intensify imagery, while hypotactic relations enable reflective, causal, and conditional reasoning that guides interpretation. When combined with figurative language such as simile, clause complexing allows grammatical structure and aesthetic expression to operate simultaneously. Simile clauses embedded within paratactic or hypotactic structures thus function not merely as stylistic embellishments but as grammatically patterned resources that systematically expand experiential and value-oriented meaning across clause complexes.

Integrating transitivity analysis with clause complex relations provides a robust analytical basis for examining how figurative language constructs cultural and value-oriented meaning in narrative texts. By situating simile within the interaction between process types, participant roles, taxis, and logico-semantic relations, SFL enables a systematic and empirically grounded account of meaning construction through grammar rather than being inferred solely from the thematic level.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by Halliday and Matthiessen, views language as a resource for making meaning. Within this framework, transitivity is not simply a grammatical structure but a system that represents experiential meaning through processes, participants, and circumstances. Previous studies have shown that transitivity analysis is effective in revealing how meaning is constructed in literary texts. Rather than providing an extensive explanation of basic clause structures such as parataxis and hypotaxis, this study focuses specifically on how transitivity can be used to analyze simile clauses as meaning-making units in literary discourse. In addition, although several studies discuss figurative language in literary texts, research that integrates simile analysis with transitivity within the context of Indonesian literary values remains limited. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by applying transitivity analysis to simile clauses in the selected novel.

## 2.2 Figurative Language in Literary Text

Figurative language is a key site where grammar and aesthetics converge, extending meanings beyond literal interpretation, enriching narrative texture, and evoking interpretive engagement (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). It originates from human conceptual systems and cognitive mechanisms, positioning it as a fundamental mode of reasoning rather than mere stylistic decoration.

Figures of speech contribute to constructing multidimensional meaning by recontextualizing experience through imaginative linguistic structures (Hawkes, 1978; Pradopo, 2004; Yang & Wongpinunwatana, 2015). In the Indonesian literary context, figures of speech have been extensively studied for their aesthetic and expressive qualities (Subroto et al., 1997; Susanto, 2009; Purwati et al., 2018). However, most research prioritizes stylistic appreciation, with limited attention to the grammatical realization or transitivity patterns of figurative constructions at the clause level.

Recent studies also highlight the role of figurative language in socio-cultural and ideological dimensions (Wibisono & Widodo, 2019). Nevertheless, the linguistic mechanisms through which figurative language operationalizes cultural or value-oriented meanings remain insufficiently specified, underscoring the need for functional linguistic approaches to systematically analyze grammatical realization in literary texts.

### 2.3 *Simile, Transitivity, and Experiential Meaning*

Among figurative devices, simile occupies a strategic position at the interface of grammar, meaning, and value construction. Simile constructions function as significant meaning-making resources, particularly within paratactic and hypotactic clause complexes, functioning not only as aesthetic devices but also as ideational resources that systematically extend experiential meaning.

Through elaboration, extension, and enhancement, simile clauses provide additional details related to time, reason, purpose, concession, or condition (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), enabling the creation of thematic depth and shaping readers' interpretive and evaluative responses. From an SFL perspective, these grammatical configurations allow simile clauses to encode experiential meanings systematically, mapping process types, participants, and circumstances onto meaning structures rather than functioning merely as ornamental devices.

Emerging research in linguistic and literary studies highlights the importance of analysing grammatical resources that support value-oriented interpretation (Brooks et al., 2021; Hossain, 2024). Yet, existing studies rarely demonstrate how specific transitivity patterns within simile clauses contribute to cultural, social, or moral meaning-making, particularly in literary texts.

In Indonesian literary studies, transitivity analyses have been applied to *Laskar Pelangi* (Yuliana et al., 2018; Yuliana et al., 2025), focusing on personification or stylistic features. However, simile clauses as grammatical mechanisms for mediating cultural and value-oriented meanings in English versions of literary texts remain largely unexplored. Investigating simile clauses through transitivity analysis offers theoretical contributions by clarifying how figurative comparison encodes experiential meaning, and illustrates how literary language systematically constructs culturally embedded meanings.

### 2.4 *Pedagogical Implications of SFL-Based Simile Analysis*

Integrating SFL-based analysis with literary interpretation highlights the analytical potential of grammatical meaning-making. Although literature is recognized for transmitting cultural and value-oriented meanings (Brooks et al., 2021; Hossain, 2024), interdisciplinary approaches that explicitly link transitivity analysis to literary interpretation remain limited.

In Indonesian literature, socio-cultural identity and communal values are central narrative elements but remain underexamined from a linguistic perspective. Applying SFL-based simile analysis provides a principled methodological pathway for uncovering how literary language encodes experiential and culturally embedded meanings. This approach bridges linguistic theory and literary analysis, advancing both analytical insight and interpretive relevance, and demonstrating how simile-driven transitivity operates as a systematic grammatical resource in narrative texts.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 *Research Design*

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design grounded in linguistic discourse analysis, suitable for examining grammatical patterns and meaning-making in literary texts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The analysis is anchored in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly the transitivity system proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), allowing systematic investigation of how experience is construed through processes, participants, and circumstances in simile clauses within English literary text.

### 3.2 *Data Source and Unit of Analysis*

The primary data were drawn from Andrea Hirata's *The Rainbow Troops*, selected for its cultural significance and international reception. The novel was originally published in Indonesian as *Laskar Pelangi* in 2005 by Bentang Pustaka and later translated into English by Angie Kilbane. The English version, published in a slightly modified form in 2009 by Bentang Pustaka, served as the data source for this study. The unit of analysis comprised simile clauses embedded within paratactic and hypotactic clause complexes occurring in descriptive, narrative, and dialogic sections.

The data of this study consist of 153 simile clauses identified from the novel. All simile constructions in the text were examined, and only clauses that explicitly contained comparative markers such as "like," "as," or their equivalents in the original text were included in the analysis. Simile expressions that appeared only as phrases without a clause structure were excluded. To ensure consistency, borderline cases were analyzed based on three criteria: (1) the presence of a comparative marker, (2) the existence of a process element within the clause, and (3) the possibility of analyzing the clause using transitivity categories (material, mental, relational, and others). This procedure was used to maintain analytical clarity and avoid subjective interpretation. Although the study refers to Spradley's qualitative approach,

the analysis is primarily SFL-based, with qualitative interpretation used to support the explanation of cultural and pedagogical meanings found in the simile clauses.

### 3.3 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection involved:

1. Close reading of the novel to identify simile clauses.
2. Annotation and coding of clauses according to simile markers and clause complex type (paratactic or hypotactic).
3. Iterative checking and recoding to ensure analytical consistency.
4. Coding sheets and analytical memos documented decisions and supported transparency throughout the research process.

### 3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis integrated Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity framework with qualitative categorization adapted from Spradley (2016), proceeding through four stages:

1. **Structural Mapping**  
Identification and classification of simile clauses within simplex and complex clause environments in the English text.
2. **Transitivity Classification**  
Analysis of process types (material, mental, relational), participant roles, and circumstantial elements realised in simile-driven clause complexes.
3. **Pattern Comparison**  
Cross-comparison of transitivity configurations and clause relations to identify dominant grammatical patterns shaping experiential meaning.
4. **Interpretive Analysis**  
Examination of how simile-driven transitivity mediates cultural and value-oriented meanings in the narrative within English literary text.

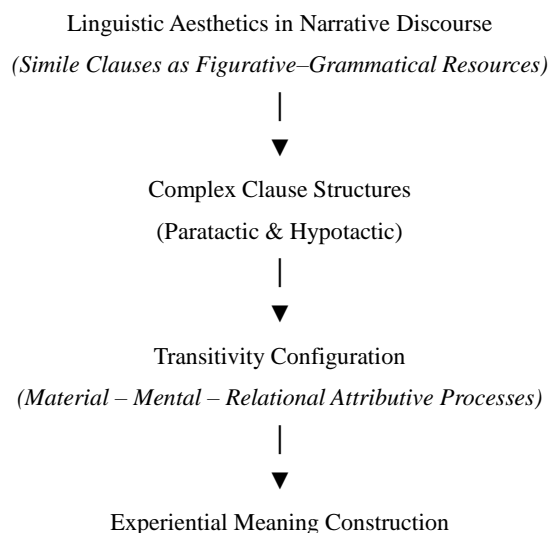
### 3.5 Trustworthiness and Triangulation

Trustworthiness was ensured through theoretical triangulation, combining SFL-based linguistic analysis with interpretive frameworks for meaning construction. Credibility was strengthened by iterative recoding, peer consultation, and reflexive memo-writing, while an audit trail documented analytical decisions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### 3.6 Conceptual Framework / Visual Model

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) illustrates how simile clauses, as figurative grammatical resources within narrative discourse, function in paratactic and hypotactic clause complexes to construct experiential meaning via the transitivity system in an English literary text. Material, mental, and relational processes organize patterned interactions among processes, participants, and circumstances, mediating value-oriented meanings such as perseverance and communal solidarity.

When applied in higher education literature courses through SFL-informed analysis, this framework demonstrates how grammatical meaning-making in English literary text can support interpretive and value-oriented outcomes.



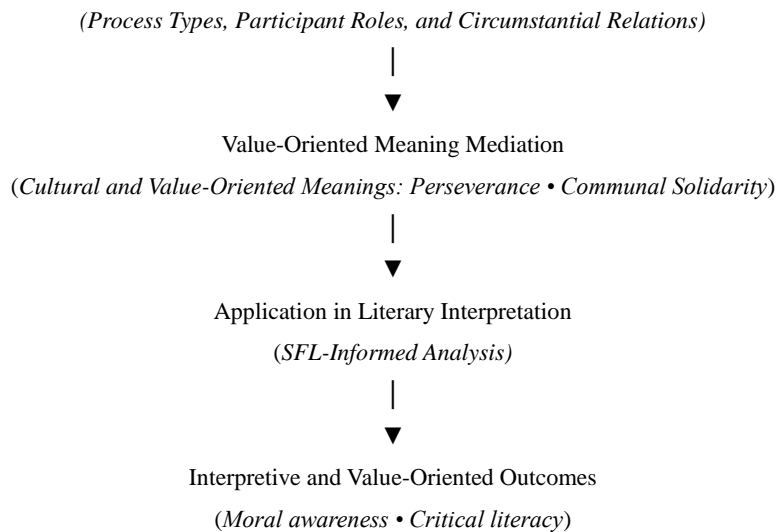


Figure 1. Conceptual Model: Simile-Driven Transitivity as a Mechanism for Constructing Value-Oriented Meaning

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

This section reports and discusses the findings in relation to the three research questions, integrating empirical description with functional interpretation, as recommended in SFL-based studies. First, it examines how simile clauses embedded in paratactic and hypotactic clause complex structures realise transitivity patterns in the English literary text *The Rainbow Troops*, with particular attention to processes, participants, and circumstances. The analysis is confined to meaning construction as realised in the English literary text. Second, it discusses how these simile-driven transitivity patterns mediate value-oriented cultural and moral meanings within the literary text. Third, it outlines the pedagogical implications of simile-based transitivity analysis for integrating linguistic inquiry with literary interpretation and character and spiritual education. The findings are supported by representative textual evidence, demonstrating how figurative language functions grammatically to construct experiential meaning and value orientation in the English literary text.

##### 4.1 Transitivity Patterns in Simile Clauses

###### 4.1.1 Distribution of Simile Clauses

The analysis identified a total of 153 simile clauses embedded in complex clause structures, consisting of 97 paratactic constructions and 56 hypotactic constructions. This distribution suggests a narrative preference for paratactic expansion, which allows experiential meanings to accumulate horizontally without imposing hierarchical dependency.

In paratactic constructions, simile clauses typically co-occur with other clauses of equal status, enabling parallel experiential meanings to unfold simultaneously. This pattern is illustrated in the clause complex “*The overabundance of energy in his body spread over to mine, stinging me like an electric shock*” (TRT, 2009: 12). Linguistically, the main material process *spread over* is expanded by a non-finite paratactic clause *stinging me like an electric shock*, in which the simile realises a circumstance of manner through the marker *like*. Both clauses contribute equally to the construction of experiential meaning, foregrounding the transmission of physical energy and its affective impact. Literarily, the simile intensifies bodily sensation by aligning internal excitement with a sudden, uncontrollable physical shock. Logically, the paratactic relation allows experiential accumulation without subordination, reinforcing immediacy and embodied perception within the narrative.

A contrasting pattern appears in hypotactic constructions, where simile clauses function as dependent enhancements that motivate or explain the main clause. This is exemplified in “*Because Pak Harfan looked quite like a grizzly bear, we were scared the first time we saw him*” (TRT, 2009: 24). Linguistically, the dependent clause introduced by *because* contains a relational attributive process *looked quite like a grizzly bear*, which functions as a causal enhancement to the mental behavioural reaction encoded in the main clause *we were scared*. Literarily, the simile activates a culturally recognisable image of physical largeness and perceived threat, shaping initial character perception. Logically, the hypotactic configuration establishes a clear cause effect relation, demonstrating how hierarchical clause dependency enables layered experiential interpretation in English narrative discourse.

This grammatical configuration allows hypotactic similes to extend experiential meaning by foregrounding evaluative and perceptual causality. In the case of *Pak Harfan*, the simile “*looked quite like a grizzly bear*” combines visual imagery with culturally loaded animal symbolism, which grammatically motivates the affective response encoded in the main clause. Functioning as a causal enhancement, the dependent simile clause adds interpretive depth by linking outward appearance to emotional reaction. This pattern exemplifies how hypotactic structures facilitate layered experiential construal, enabling readers to process perception, evaluation, and response as a hierarchically organised sequence within narrative discourse.

###### 4.1.2 Transitivity Processes

### Transitivity Processes in Paratactic Simile Clauses

Paratactic simile clauses in *The Rainbow Troops* predominantly realise relational attributive processes, complemented by material and behavioural processes, with simile markers (*like, as, resemble*) functioning as comparative relational operators. The absence of grammatical dependency between clauses allows experiential meanings to accumulate through parallel alignment rather than hierarchical subordination.

#### Relational Attributive Processes

The most frequent configuration involves Carrier + relational process + Attribute, where simile functions to assign qualities, identities, or evaluations to participants.

Examples include:

“*He was like a little kid sitting on a pony delighted, not wanting to get down.*” (TRT, 2009: 10)

“*He was like an artillery plant when drops of water fall on its petals, it shoots out pollen-glittering, blossoming and full of life*” (TRT, 2009: 12)

“*Bu Mus was as white as a ghost when Mister Samadikun arrived for the surprise school inspection.*” (TRT, 2009: 89)

In these clauses, the relational process *was like* and *was* construe identification and evaluation, while the simile realises the Attribute, projecting social, emotional, or physical qualities. The experiential meaning is thus not descriptive alone but evaluative, encoding character traits such as innocence, strength, discipline, or vulnerability.

Relational processes are also realised through resemblance constructions, as in:

“*He resembled a pine tree struck by lightning: black, withered, thin and stiff.*” (TRT, 2009: 10)

Here, *resembled* operates as a subtype of relational attribution, aligning physical appearance with culturally recognisable imagery, thereby strengthening perceptual vividness.

#### Material and Behavioural Processes with Comparative Adjuncts

Material processes occur when similes accompany actions or physical events, intensifying embodied experience:

“*The overabundance of energy in his body spread over to mine, stinging me like an electric shock*” (TRT, 2009: 12)

In this example, material processes *spread* construes physical movement or action, while the simile operates as a circumstantial adjunct of manner or quality, amplifying intensity and affect. The simile does not introduce a new process but re-scales the experiential impact of the existing one.

Behavioural processes also appear, as in:

“*In the meantime, Lintang's head was spinning around like an owl's.*” (TRT, 2009: 18)

Here, the behavioural process *spinning* mediates between physical action and mental state, while the simile accentuates cognitive overload through animal imagery.

#### Experiential Accumulation through Parataxis

Because paratactic similes are not grammatically dependent, they allow multiple experiential perspectives to co-exist:

“*We were like small mollusks clinging together to defend ourselves from the pounding waves in the ocean of knowledge*” (TRT, 2009: 70)

This configuration supports collective identity construction, where relational attribution and embedded material imagery jointly construe vulnerability, constraint, and shared endurance.

### Transitivity Processes in Hypotactic Simile Clauses

In contrast, hypotactic simile clauses realise transitivity through hierarchically organised dependency, enabling causal, temporal, comparative, and elaborative meanings to be grammatically foregrounded. Similes in hypotaxis frequently function as enhancements, elaborations, or projections, shaping how experiential meaning unfolds sequentially.

#### Material and Relational Processes in Enhancement Clauses

Temporal and causal hypotactic clauses commonly combine material processes with simile-based enhancement:

“*He was like an artillery plant when drops of water fall on its petals, it shoots out pollen-glittering, blossoming and full of life*” (TRT, 2009: 12)

Here, material and relational processes *fall* is embedded within temporal or causal enhancement, grammatically sequencing perception and response. The simile sharpens sensory imagery while the hypotactic relation explains *why* or *when* an action or emotion occurs.

### Mental and Relational Processes in Projection

Hypotactic similes frequently realise mental processes, especially in clauses of projection:

*“Being close to Lintang, I felt like I was being challenged to run in a hundred-meter dash.”* (TRT, 2009: 12)

The mental processes *felt* construes internal states, while the simile operates as a projected experience, allowing readers access to subjective evaluation and emotional depth.

### Elaborative Relational Configurations

Relative and non-finite clauses enable similes to elaborate participants:

*“The dredges’ steel bowls never stopped digging into Belitong’s soil, they were like giant, greedy snakes that knew no exhaustion.”* (TRT, 2009: 31)

In these cases, relational attribution is expanded through elaboration, adding layers of descriptive and evaluative detail. The simile construct’s identity not as a fixed attribute but as a cumulatively elaborated experiential entity.

Across both structures, simile-driven transitivity patterns reveal systematic grammatical behaviour. Paratactic similes favour relational attribution and experiential accumulation, foregrounding immediacy and shared perception. Hypotactic similes, by contrast, organise material, mental, and relational processes into hierarchically structured sequences, enabling causality, reflection, and interpretive depth. Overall, these patterns demonstrate that simile in *The Rainbow Troops* functions as a grammatical resource for experiential meaning-making, rather than a merely decorative stylistic device.

#### 4.1.3 Participant Roles

Simile clauses in *The Rainbow Troops* systematically configure participant roles to construe character identity, embodied experience, and evaluative stance. Across the selected data, participants are predominantly realised as Carriers, Actors, and Sensors, reflecting a grammatical orientation toward attribution, action, and perception. These core roles are further expanded through Attributes, Circumstances, and, in hypotactic constructions, Initiators, enabling similes to function as integral resources for experiential meaning-making rather than as ornamental comparisons.

#### Carrier–Attribute Configurations and Character Identification

Relational attributive processes are the most salient configuration in simile clauses that construct identity and personal qualities. In these clauses, the participant functioning as Carrier is typically a human character or collective entity, while the Attribute is realised through simile, encoding evaluation and characterisation.

Paratactic example (individual characterisation):

*“He was like a little kid sitting on a pony delighted, not wanting to get down.”*  
(TRT, 2009: 10)

Here, *he* functions as the Carrier, while *like a little kid sitting on a pony* realises the Attribute. The non-finite elements *delighted* and *not wanting to get down* further specify emotional disposition. The relational configuration constructs innocence and joy as inherent attributes of the character rather than externally imposed judgments.

A similar pattern appears in descriptive identification:

*“He resembled a pine tree struck by lightning: black, withered, thin and stiff.”*  
(TRT, 2009: 10)

In this clause, *he* functions as Carrier, while *a pine tree struck by lightning* operates as Attribute, extended through elaboration. The simile assigns visual and physical qualities to the participant, enabling vivid character depiction through relational attribution.

Collective identity is likewise constructed through relational configurations:

*“We were like small mollusks clinging together to defend ourselves from the pounding waves in the ocean of knowledge.”* (TRT, 2009: 70)

Here, *we* functions as Carrier, while *like small mollusks* serves as Attribute. The embedded material process *clinging together* introduces agency within vulnerability, constructing collective endurance through shared fragility.

#### Actor Roles and Embodied Action

Material processes frequently position participants as Actors, foregrounding bodily movement and physical interaction. In these clauses, similes typically function as circumstantial elements that intensify the experiential scope of action.

Paratactic example (physical interaction):

*“He greeted me with a strong handshake, like a father shaking hands with his daughter's first suitor.”* (TRT, 2009: 12)

Here, *he* functions as Actor in the material process *greeted*, while *me* operates as Goal. The simile functions as a Circumstance of manner, enriching the action with culturally recognisable social meaning associated with respect and formality.

Another material configuration foregrounds sensory impact:

*“The overabundance of energy in his body spread over to mine, stinging me like an electric shock.”* (TRT, 2009: 12)

In this clause, *the overabundance of energy in his body* acts as Actor, while *me* functions as Goal. The simile like an electric shock amplifies bodily sensation, constructing experience through intensified physical transmission.

#### Senser Roles and Subjective Evaluation

Mental processes in simile clauses position participants as Sensers, allowing experiential meaning to be construed through perception and feeling.

Hypotactic example (subjective experience):

*“Being close to Lintang, I felt like I was being challenged to run in a hundred-meter dash.”* (TRT, 2009: 12)

Here, *I* functions as Senser, while *felt* realises a mental process. The projected simile clause construes emotional and cognitive response through bodily metaphor, positioning subjective experience as central to meaning construction.

Mental perception also appears in evaluative recognition:

*“Those words were ingrained in our souls and remained there throughout the journey to adulthood; we knew them like the back of our own hands.”* (TRT, 2009: 19)

In this clause, *we* operates as Senser, and the simile functions to intensify certainty and familiarity, reinforcing cognitive mastery through embodied knowledge.

#### Initiator Roles and Causal Attribution

In hypotactic simile clauses, non-human or abstract entities frequently function as Initiators, triggering reactions or states in human participants.

Hypotactic example (causal stimulus):

*“Because Pak Harfan looked quite like a grizzly bear, we were scared the first time we saw him.”* (TRT, 2009: 24)

Here, *Pak Harfan* functions as the Initiator through the relational process *looked*, which causes the emotional response encoded in the main clause. The simile mediates perception and reaction, constructing fear as a result of visual impression rather than inherent character.

A similar causal configuration appears in evaluative projection:

*“Bu Mus was awestruck, she just stared at Lintang as if he were a stunning pearl in a clam.”* (TRT, 2009: 55)

The simile projects evaluative perception, positioning the compared entity as the stimulus that triggers emotional response, thereby linking aesthetic appraisal with affective experience.

Overall, participant roles in simile clauses are systematically patterned to support experiential and evaluative meaning. Carrier–Attribute configurations foreground identity and personal qualities, Actor roles construe embodied action and interaction, Senser roles enable subjective reflection, and Initiator roles encode causal relationships between perception and response. Through these participant configurations, simile operates as a grammatical resource that integrates characterisation, embodiment, and evaluation within English literary text.

#### 4.1.4 Clause Complex Relations and Experiential Meaning

Clause complex relations play a crucial role in extending experiential meaning through simile constructions in *The Rainbow Troops*. Paratactic relations allow experiential meanings to accumulate horizontally through clauses of equal status, while hypotactic relations introduce dependency that specifies causal, temporal, and circumstantial dimensions. Together, these configurations enable similes to function as systematic grammatical resources for construing layered experience.

In paratactic constructions, simile clauses coexist with other clauses without hierarchical subordination, allowing multiple experiential perspectives to unfold simultaneously. For example:

*“His welcome address emerged like poetic pearls of wisdom, and a joyous atmosphere enveloped his humble school.”* (TRT, 2009: 24)

In the clause *his welcome address emerged like poetic pearls of wisdom*, the process *emerged* realises a material process of happening, construing *his welcome address* as the Actor undergoing an event of emergence rather than performing a deliberate action. The simile *like poetic pearls of wisdom* functions as a Circumstance of manner comparison, intensifying evaluative meaning by attributing moral and

intellectual value to the verbal expression. The second clause, *a joyous atmosphere enveloped his humble school*, realises a material process of doing, with *a joyous atmosphere* as the Actor and *his humble school* as the Goal, representing the affective impact on the social space. Linked by the coordinating conjunction *and*, the two clauses form a paratactic extension that places verbal authority and emotional influence in an equal experiential relationship. This alignment allows meanings associated with moral wisdom and collective joy to accumulate simultaneously, enriching experiential meaning without establishing a causal hierarchy between speech and atmosphere. A similar accumulative pattern appears in:

*“The dredges’ steel bowls never stopped digging into Belitong’s soil, they were like giant, greedy snakes that knew no exhaustion.”* (TRT, 2009: 31)

Here, the material process *digging* is extended paratactically by a relational attributive clause *were like giant, greedy snakes*. The simile intensifies the material action by attributing destructive agency to the dredges, enabling physical exploitation and evaluative judgment to co-occur within a single clause complex.

By contrast, hypotactic relations introduce dependency that guides interpretation through enhancement or elaboration. For instance:

*“Because Pak Harfan looked quite like a grizzly bear, we were scared the first time we saw him.”* (TRT, 2009: 24)

The dependent clause introduced by *because* provides causal enhancement. The relational process *looked like* functions as the experiential trigger for the mental–affective response encoded in the main clause *we were scared*. This hypotactic configuration grammatically sequences perception and reaction, allowing experiential meaning to unfold through dependency.

Similarly, temporal enhancement is realised in:

*“Being close to Lintang, I felt like I was being challenged to run in a hundred-meter dash.”* (TRT, 2009: 12)

The non-finite hypotactic clause *being close to Lintang* establishes a circumstantial condition for the mental process *felt*, while the projected simile clause construes subjective experience through embodied comparison. Such dependency enables nuanced experiential interpretation grounded in perception and affect.

Across both structures, simile clauses are grammatically systematic rather than stylistically incidental. Paratactic relations intensify and accumulate experience, while hypotactic relations organise experience through causal, temporal, and circumstantial sequencing. These clause complex relations provide a structural foundation for mediating value-oriented meanings in the narrative.

## 4.2 Simile-Driven Transitivity and Value-Oriented Meaning

### 4.2.1 Character Education Values

Character education values in *The Rainbow Troops* are predominantly encoded through material processes, which position characters as active Actors engaged in observable action. Simile constructions intensify these processes, foregrounding perseverance, diligence, and effort as embodied practices rather than abstract traits.

For example:

*“In the meantime, Lintang’s head was spinning around like an owl’s.”* (TRT, 2009: 18)

The material process *spinning* construes sustained cognitive effort through physical motion, with *Lintang’s head* functioning as Actor. The simile *like an owl’s* intensifies concentration and alertness, rendering perseverance experientially visible. Character values are thus constructed through action-oriented grammatical patterns rather than evaluative commentary.

A similar configuration appears in sensory endurance:

*“The suctioning of the tennis ball halves felt like stings from killer bees.”* (TRT, 2009: 33)

Here, the experiential meaning of pain and endurance is intensified through simile, reinforcing resilience as an embodied response to challenge.

### 4.2.2 Linguistic Construction of Spiritual Values

Spiritual values are primarily construed through mental processes realised in simile clauses, positioning characters as Sensors engaged in perception, reflection, and emotional awareness. These clauses typically occur in hypotactic structures, which allow spiritual experience to be framed as inward and introspective.

For instance:

*“Bu Mus was awestruck, she just stared at Lintang as if he were a stunning pearl in a clam.”* (TRT, 2009: 55)

The mental–behavioural process *was awestruck* and *stared* positions, *Bu Mus* as Sensor. The simile *as if he were a stunning pearl in a clam* projects evaluative perception, construing admiration and reverence as internalised experience. Spiritual value is thus realised as contemplative awareness rather than overt action.

Similarly, spiritual composure is foregrounded in:

*“Sitting on it, one felt like an exalted king.”* (TRT, 2009: 22)

The mental process felt encodes internal state, while the simile elevates the experience to one of dignity and reverence, linking perception with moral-spiritual elevation.

#### 4.2.3 Cultural Values and Communal Solidarity

Cultural values, particularly communal solidarity and collective identity, are predominantly encoded through relational attributive processes realised via simile constructions. These clauses define individuals or groups in relation to culturally familiar referents, reinforcing shared values and social cohesion.

A representative example is:

*“We were like small mollusks clinging together to defend ourselves from the pounding waves in the ocean of knowledge.”* (TRT, 2009: 70)

The relational process *were like* positions *we* as Carrier and *small mollusks clinging together...* as Attribute. The simile constructs collective vulnerability and mutual support, encoding communal solidarity as a defining cultural value within the educational struggle.

#### 4.2.4 Simile-Based Value Construction Patterns

Across the analysed data, simile-driven transitivity systematically mediates value-oriented meanings through patterned grammatical choices:

1. Material processes foreground action-based values such as perseverance, diligence, and endurance.
2. Mental processes construe spiritual and emotional values as internalised reflection and awareness.
3. Relational attributive processes construct cultural identity, communal solidarity, and social evaluation.

These findings confirm that simile in *The Rainbow Troops* functions as a functional grammatical resource for experiential and evaluative meaning-making in English literary text. By integrating transitivity, clause complexing, and figurative comparison, the narrative extends Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) model of experiential meaning and supports value-oriented literary interpretation and education.

### 4.3 Discussion

This study demonstrates that simile clauses embedded in paratactic and hypotactic complex structures in *The Rainbow Troops* function as systematic grammatical resources for construing experiential meaning and mediating cultural, moral, and spiritual values, rather than serving merely as ornamental stylistic devices. Simile clauses are realised through patterned transitivity configurations within clause complexes, indicating that figurative comparison is grammatically motivated. By integrating simile analysis with transitivity patterns within the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework, the findings extend Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) model of experiential meaning by demonstrating how figurative comparison intensifies meaning potential through recurrent process, participant, circumstance configurations. In this sense, simile-driven transitivity operates as a mechanism of value construction embedded in narrative discourse. The analysis shows that material, mental, and relational processes are the most frequently used in simile clauses. However, the relationship between process types and meaning is not absolute. While material processes often represent perseverance, several examples also reflect emotional struggle and social interaction. Similarly, mental processes are frequently associated with spirituality, but some clauses express psychological tension rather than religious meaning. This indicates that transitivity patterns do not determine meaning in a deterministic way but rather provide a linguistic resource through which different meanings can be constructed. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as tendencies rather than fixed patterns.

This functional interpretation aligns with classical definitions of simile as an explicit comparison between two distinct entities perceived to share certain similarities, typically marked by expressions such as *like* or *as* (Kridalaksana, 2008; Sudjiman, 1986; Suryawinata & Hariyanto, 2003). Scholars have emphasised that simile relies on overt linguistic markers linking a topic and a vehicle through a shared feature of similarity (Larson, 1984; Pierini, 2007; Gibbs, 1994), making it cognitively accessible and culturally transferable. However, the present findings suggest that simile cannot be fully understood solely at the level of surface comparison, as such accounts foreground imagery enhancement and reader engagement while leaving the experiential organisation of simile clauses within clause complexes largely unexplored (Zaimar, 2002; Shamisa, 2004; Sutedjo, 2010).

Typological approaches reinforce this form-oriented perspective. For instance, Ikeda and Sukagawa's classifications (in Timota, 2008) categorise simile according to recurrent grammatical patterns such as *be (as) + adjective + as + noun* or *verb + like + noun*, distinguishing intensifying from descriptive similes. Comparable distinctions appear in Ortony's (1993) categorisation of literal and non-literal similes, and in Suryawinata and Hariyanto's (2003) differentiation between clichéd and creative similes. While valuable for identifying formal variation, these frameworks do not account for how simile clauses realise specific process types or how they interact with paratactic and hypotactic relations, as evidenced in the findings. As a result, simile is treated primarily as structural comparison rather than as a functional resource for construing experience and value.

By contrast, the transitivity system within SFL reconceptualises simile as a functional grammatical resource that construes experience through patterned process types (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The findings show that simile clauses in *The Rainbow Troops* are systematically realised through material, mental, and relational attributive processes, by demonstrating how simile operates across core experiential domains. Circumstantial elements expressing comparison may occur either before or after the process, confirming that simile functions flexibly within clause structures rather than conforming to fixed grammatical templates. This flexibility supports the argument

that simile operates dynamically across transitivity configurations and clause complex relations, extending Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) model by accounting for figurative-driven value construction.

Earlier empirical studies largely examined simile by identifying figurative markers and rhetorical effects. For example, Setiawati and Maryani (2018) focus on emotional expression in song lyrics, while Sadeq (2019) analyses simile as a persuasive strategy in political speeches. Although these studies acknowledge the affective and communicative force of simile, they do not examine how simile clauses are embedded within paratactic and hypotactic structures or realised through specific transitivity processes, as demonstrated in the present findings. Consequently, the experiential and ideological work of simile at the clause level has remained underexplored, particularly in literary narrative discourse.

The predominance of simile clauses realised within paratactic complex structures indicates a narrative preference for equal clause expansion as a strategy for intensifying experiential meaning. Paratactic relations allow multiple experiential perspectives to co-occur without hierarchical dependency, enabling experiential and evaluative meanings to accumulate through simultaneity. Material processes dominate simile constructions, particularly in paratactic environments, foregrounding action, effort, and embodied experience. This pattern explains how moral values are construed implicitly through action rather than explicit evaluation, supporting Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) assertion that material processes construe doings and happenings central to experiential meaning. The findings further extend this claim by showing how simile amplifies material processes to encode character education values, resonating with Brooks et al. (2021), who argue that values in literature are most effectively transmitted through experiential engagement.

Simile-driven transitivity further encodes distinct value domains. Material processes foreground physical actions and embodied experiences, linking effort and response to moral and spiritual engagement. Mental processes, particularly in hypotactic constructions, construe internal cognition, reflection, and spiritual awareness by positioning characters as Sensers within clauses of perception and cognition (Sadeq, 2019; Wibisono & Widodo, 2019). Relational attributive processes construct collective and cultural identity by equating participants with shared, culturally resonant referents, systematically encoding solidarity, resilience, and communal values (Özdemir, 2023; Wijaya & Hermanto, 2024). Hypotactic relations, in particular, facilitate layered and causally linked interpretations, highlighting the ideological significance of grammatical dependency in narrative meaning-making (Ahn, 2021; Babai & Ansary, 2019).

Theoretically, this study reconceptualises simile as a functional grammatical resource rather than a purely stylistic phenomenon, responding directly to gaps identified in previous research. By showing how simile clauses systematically realise transitivity patterns within paratactic and hypotactic structures, the study extends experiential meaning theory to account for figurative-driven value construction in narrative discourse (Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Eggins, 2004). Given the broad circulation of *The Rainbow Troops* beyond its original cultural context (Yuliana, 2025), simile-driven transitivity functions as a mechanism for encoding culturally grounded values while maintaining experiential accessibility across diverse readerships.

Pedagogically, the findings demonstrate that simile clauses function as effective instructional resources when examined through transitivity analysis. Material-process similes construe virtues such as perseverance, diligence, and resilience through embodied action; mental-process similes foreground introspective engagement with spiritual and ethical values; and relational-attributive similes construct communal solidarity and cultural identity through shared attributes. These findings empirically support a linguistically informed pedagogy that integrates critical reading, ethical reflection, and value-oriented learning, in line with Brooks et al. (2021) and Hossain (2024).

Methodologically, this study demonstrates the robustness of SFL for examining value-laden meaning in literary text. Figurative constructions are shown to be systematically realised through grammatical choice, making them empirically analysable and bridging qualitative literary interpretation with systematic linguistic description (Darani, 2014; Rajendra, 2020). Future research may extend this framework to other figurative resources or translated versions of *The Rainbow Troops* to examine how simile-driven transitivity patterns are maintained, shifted, or reconfigured across languages, contributing to translation-oriented SFL research (Chesterman, 2000; Nord, 1997).

#### 4.3.2 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes three interrelated contributions:

1. Theoretical contribution

This study does not seek to extend Halliday and Matthiessen's transitivity model. Rather, it demonstrates how the transitivity system can be systematically applied to analyse simile clauses in literary texts and to interpret figurative language and cultural values in Indonesian literary discourse.

2. Methodological contribution

By integrating SFL-based transitivity analysis with Spradley's ethnographic analytical procedures, the study offers a multi-layered methodological approach that connects grammatical patterning with cultural value interpretation. This framework provides a replicable model for future linguistic, literary, and educational research.

3. Pedagogical contribution

The study provides a linguistically grounded pedagogical perspective in which simile-driven transitivity functions as a resource

for character and spiritual education. Linguistic aesthetics facilitate moral awareness, empathy, identity formation, and culturally responsive literacy in higher education literature courses.

4.3.3 Pedagogical Implications

From an SFL-informed pedagogical perspective, simile clauses function as systematic pedagogical resources when examined through transitivity analysis. Material-process similes construe virtues such as perseverance, diligence, and resilience through embodied action; mental-process similes foreground introspective engagement with spiritual and ethical values by construing internal consciousness; and relational-attributive similes construct communal solidarity and cultural identity through shared attributes. Importantly, these values are not stated explicitly but are grammatically enacted through process-participant configurations intensified by simile, allowing learners to access values experientially rather than prescriptively. Collectively, these simile-based transitivity patterns support a linguistically informed pedagogy that integrates critical reading, ethical reflection, and value-oriented learning in higher education literature classrooms.

To synthesise the pedagogical and theoretical implications, Table 4.1 presents an integrated overview of simile-driven transitivity using only representative examples identified in the findings section, linking grammatical realisation, encoded values, pedagogical applications, and SFL-based theoretical insights. The table demonstrates that simile-based transitivity constitutes a coherent framework for value-oriented literary analysis and instruction rather than a collection of isolated stylistic effects.

Table 1. Integrated Implications Table

Process Type	Simile Example	Encoded Value	Pedagogical Application	Theoretical Insight / Reference
Material	“In the meantime, Lintang's head was spinning around like an owl's. (TRT, 2009: 18)	Perseverance, diligence	Moral values through observable action	Material processes enact experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014)
Mental	“Bu Mus was awestruck, she just stared at Lintang as if he were a stunning pearl in a clam.” (TRT, 2009: 55)	Spiritual reflection	Encourage affective interpretation	Mental processes encode inner awareness
Relational Attributive	“We were like small mollusks clinging together to defend ourselves from the pounding waves in the ocean of knowledge.” (TRT, 2009: 70)	Communal solidarity, shared vulnerability	Develop awareness of collective identity and cooperation	Relational processes construe social identity and ideology

Note: TRT = The Rainbow Troops.

Table 4.1 highlights the pedagogical relevance of simile-driven transitivity by systematically mapping grammatical process types onto encoded values and instructional applications in *The Rainbow Troops*. The table demonstrates that material processes predominantly support action-based moral learning by construing perseverance, diligence, and resilience through embodied struggle intensified by simile. Mental-process similes facilitate spiritual and ethical reflection by representing perception, cognition, and affect as internalised experiential domains. Relational attributive processes, realised through simile, construct communal solidarity and cultural awareness by equating participants with culturally shared referents. Collectively, these patterned transitivity choices confirm that simile functions as a functional grammatical resource rather than a stylistic ornament, bridging grammatical analysis, value construction, and literature-based education, and demonstrating how figurative language systematically encodes moral, spiritual, and social meanings in narrative discourse.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that simile-driven transitivity in *The Rainbow Troops* operates as a systematic grammatical mechanism for construing experiential meaning and mediating moral, cultural, and spiritual values. Material processes foreground action-based experience and ethical striving, mental processes construe internal cognition and reflective awareness, and relational-attributive processes encode communal affiliation and cultural identity. These meanings are dynamically organised through clause complexing: paratactic structures intensify experiential meaning via parallelism and accumulation, while hypotactic structures enable reflective, elaborative, and causally motivated interpretation. Through these patterned configurations, simile-driven transitivity embeds values such as perseverance, resilience, spiritual awareness, ethical reflection, and communal solidarity within narrative discourse. Pedagogically, this framework supports linguistically informed literature instruction by integrating critical literacy, ethical reasoning, empathy development, and culturally responsive learning, underscoring the inseparable aesthetic and educational functions of literary language.

6. Implication

The findings of this study generate three interrelated implications. Theoretically, this research advances SFL-based literary studies by reconceptualising simile as a functional grammatical resource rather than a purely stylistic ornament. Simile-driven transitivity provides a principled framework for analysing how grammatical choice, experiential meaning, and value construction interact in narrative discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Pedagogically, the study offers a linguistically grounded model for integrating SFL into literature education. By guiding students to examine how simile clauses encode moral, cultural, and spiritual values through transitivity patterns, literature instruction can move beyond thematic discussion toward critical engagement with language, identity, and ethics. This approach aligns with contemporary educational goals emphasising character formation, empathy, and reflective literacy. Practically, the findings reinforce the role of literary texts in cultivating cultural literacy and spiritual awareness. Simile-driven analysis enables literature to function

as a resource for nurturing resilience, communal responsibility, and ethical sensitivity, supporting holistic education in multicultural and spiritually diverse contexts. Beyond the Indonesian setting, the analytical framework proposed in this study has broader applicability. It can be extended to literary texts across cultures, genres, and languages, positioning linguistic aesthetics as a bridge between literary analysis, moral education, and intercultural understanding.

### 7. Recommendations for Future Research

To extend the scope and impact of this study, future research may consider the following directions:

1. Investigating other figurative resources (e.g., metaphor, personification, hyperbole) through transitivity analysis to enrich understanding of linguistic aesthetics in literary texts.
2. Conducting comparative or cross-cultural studies to identify convergent and divergent patterns of value construction across literary traditions.
3. Applying the framework to translated versions of *The Rainbow Troops* to examine how simile-driven transitivity is preserved or transformed across languages.
4. Implementing classroom-based empirical studies to evaluate the pedagogical effectiveness of SFL-informed simile analysis in character and moral education.
5. Employing corpus-based quantitative methods to generalise patterns of simile-driven transitivity across larger datasets.
6. Exploring students' identity negotiation and ethical positioning in response to value-oriented literary instruction.

### Acknowledgments

We greatly appreciate the valuable contributions of our community advisory committee members. We would also like to thank the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) and every team member who took the time to participate in this study.

### Author contributions

Rini Yuliana and Novita Siswayanti conceptualized the study and were responsible for the overall research design and critical revision of the manuscript. Novita Siswayanti, Jarwadi, and Tatang Subagyo supervised the data collection process and conducted the data analysis. Suci Paresti, Slamet Wibowo, and Budiana Setiawan contributed to the pedagogical implications and interpretation of the findings. Rini Yuliana drafted the manuscript and refined the final version. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

### Funding

Not applicable

### Competing interests

Not applicable

### Informed consent

Obtained.

### Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

### Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

### Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

### Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

### Open access

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

### Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

**References**

- Ahn, H. (2021). Transitivity analysis in literary texts: Exploring ideology through narrative representation. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 14(2), 45-58.
- Alaci, M., & Ahangari, S. (2016). A study of ideational metafunction in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: A critical discourse analysis. *English Language Teaching*, 9(4), 203. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n4p203>
- Babai, A., & Ansary, H. (2019). Interpersonal metaphors and transitivity in ideological discourse. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 8(3), 120-130.
- Brooks, E., Cohen de Lara, E., Sánchez-Ostiz, Á., & Torralba, J. M. (Eds.). (2021). *Literature and character education in universities*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003162209>
- Chueasuai, P. (2022). Transitivity system and a translation of lexical metaphors: The case of the Emirates Airline website. *MANUSYA: Journal of Humanities*, 25(1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1163/26659077-25010012>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Darani, L. H. (2014). Persuasive style and its realization through transitivity analysis: A SFL perspective. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 158, 179-186. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.12.066>
- Dong, M., Fang, A. C., & Qiu, X. (2020). Shell nouns as grammatical metaphor in knowledge construal: Variation across science and engineering discourse. *Lingua*, 248. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2020.102946>
- Eggs, S. (2004). *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics* (2nd ed.). Continuum.
- Gibbs, R. W. (1994). *The poetics of mind: Figurative thought, language, and understanding*. Cambridge University Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar*. Oxford University Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203783771>
- Hawkes, T. (1978). *Metaphor and figurative language*. Routledge.
- Hirata, A. (2009). *The Rainbow Troops*. Benteng Pustaka.
- Hossain, K. I. (2024). Literature-based language learning: Challenges and opportunities for English learners. *Ampersand*, 13, 100201. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amper.2024.100201>
- Kridalaksana, H. (2008). *Kamus linguistik*. PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2003). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226470993.001.0001>
- Larson, M. L. (1984). *Meaning-based translation: A guide to cross-language equivalence*. University Press of America.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(85\)90062-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(85)90062-8)
- Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar*. Routledge.
- Ogunmuyiwa, H. O., & Antia, B. E. (2020). Corruption in a diachronic corpus of Nigerian presidential speeches. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 38(2), 95-108. <https://doi.org/10.2989/16073614.2020.1763813>
- Ortony, A. (1993). *Metaphor and thought* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139173865>
- Özdemir, F. (2023). Figurative language and value construction in character education materials. *Journal of Moral and Citizenship Education*, 17(1), 33-49.
- Pierini, P. (2007). Simile in English: From description to translation. *CÍRCULO de Lingüística Aplicada a la Comunicación*, 29, 21-43.
- Pradopo, R. D. (2004). *Pengkajian puisi*. Yogyakarta: Garudhawaca.
- Purwati, R., Rosdiana, R., Lestari, R. D., & Firmansyah, D. (2018). Menganalisis gaya bahasa metafora dalam novel "Laskar Pelangi" karya Andrea Hirata. *Parole*, 1. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22460/p.v1i3p%25p>
- Putri, N., & Salayo, N. (2020). Transitivity processes in youth novels and value representation. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(2), 350-365.
- Rahmawati, D. (2022). Local wisdom and educational values in Indonesian literary works. *Journal of Nusantara Education*, 4(1), 77-88.
- Rajendra, T. R. (2020). Transitivity choices in an abridged text: The case of a graphic novel. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 7(2), 544-557. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v7i2.17421>
- Sadeq, A. E. (2019). Simile and personification of King Abdullah II's English speeches as rhetorical stylistic devices in political speech. *Literary Endeavour repository*.

- Sakadolskis, E. A. (2003). *The use of figurative language in the construction of musical meaning* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Maryland.
- Santosa, R. (2003). *Semiotika sosial: Pandangan terhadap bahasa*. Pustaka Eureka.
- Setiawati, W., & Maryani. (2018). An analysis of figurative language in Taylor Swift's song lyric. *PROJECT, 1*.  
<https://doi.org/10.22460/project.v1i3.p261-268>
- Shamisa, S. (2004). *Rhetoric 2*. Payamnoor Publication.
- Spradley, J. P. (2016). *Participant observation*. Waveland Press.
- Subroto, D. E., Wiranto, Paino, Soewarno, T., & Kasmadi, A. D. (1997). *Telaah linguistik atas novel Tirai Menurun karya N. H. Dini*. Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa.
- Sudjiman, P. (1986). *Kamus istilah sastra*. Gramedia.
- Suryawinata, Z., & Hariyanto, S. (2003). *Translation: Bahasa teori & penuntun praktis menerjemahkan*. Kanisius.
- Susanto. (2009). Kearifan bahasa dalam tetralogi *Laskar Pelangi*: Sebuah pendekatan sistemik fungsional. In *Proceedings of Seminar Nasional on Bahasa, Sastra dan Budaya dalam Konteks Kearifan Lokal*. Madura: Universitas Trunojoyo.
- Sutedjo. (2010). *Stilistika: Teori, aplikasi dan alternatif pembelajarannya*. Pustaka Felicha.
- Tarrayo, V. N., & Duque, N. (2021). Stylistics in multimodal literary pedagogy: Teaching values through figurative language. *Journal of Culture, Society and Education, 11*(4), 221-236.
- Timota, S. (2008). *Simile in Oliver Twist: Humanisation & dehumanization*. Retrieved from  
<https://www.soc.nii.ac.jp/dickens/archieve/ot/ot-tomita>
- Waluyo, H. J. (1991). *Teori dan apresiasi puisi*. Jakarta: Erlangga.
- Wibisono, R. T., & Widodo, P. (2019). An analysis of figurative language in online short story posted on *The Jakarta Post*. *Linguistik: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra, 4*(2), 62-72. <https://doi.org/10.31604/linguistik.v4i2.62-72>
- Wijaya, D., & Hermanto, Y. (2024). The role of figurative expressions in developing moral literacy in contemporary Indonesian novels. *Journal of Asian Education Studies, 5*(2), 15-29.
- Wiratno, T. (2018). *Fungsi-fungsi bahasa: Perspektif linguistik sistemik fungsional*. UNS Press.
- Yang, B., & Wongpinunwatana, W. (2015). Figure of speech in the translation of the book sets of common knowledge about China. *International Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, 5*(5), 183-188. <https://doi.org/10.20469/ijhss.5.20002-5>
- Yuliana, R., Santosa, R., Sumarlam, & Wiratno, T. (2018). Transitivity of simile clauses in the novel *And the Mountain Echoed* by Khalid Hosseini. *Prasasti, 166*, 262-266. <https://doi.org/10.2991/prasasti-18.2018.50>
- Yuliana, R., Santosa, R., Sumarlam, & Wiratno, T. (2019). Transitivity of simile in *Laskar Pelangi*. *Prasasti, 338*, 419-426. <https://doi.org/10.2991/prasasti-19.2019.72>
- Yuliana, R., Santosa, R., Sumarlam, Wiratno, T., Nurdiani, N., Darheni, N., Putra, I. K. S., Hakim, L., Yulianto, A., & Supriadi, A. (2025). Literary enchantment: Unravelling *Laskar Pelangi* through transitivity and personification clauses in higher education literature studies. *World Journal of English Language, 15*(5), 63-78.
- Zaimar, O. K. S. (2002). Majas dan pembentukannya. *Makara, Sosial Humaniora, 6*(2). <https://doi.org/10.7454/mssh.v6i2.38>