



## Revealing Transitivity of Circular Letters as Legal Text Using Systemic Functional Linguistics Approach

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### **Abstract**

This research attempts to reveal the linguistics characteristics of circular letters as legal texts through transitivity analysis to explain the way circular letter deliver the message in achieving the goal. This research describes the pattern of transitivity in the text of the Circular Letter of Ministry of Research and Technology/BRIN. This research is a descriptive-qualitative research. This is a case study of transitivity in circular letters as legal texts. The source of data in this research is circular letter texts. The data in this study is the realization of transitivity within clause. Data collection techniques in this research is document analysis. The results showed the average percentage of process occurrence in circular text is Material process 93 (72,09%), verbal process 10 (7,75%), mental behaviour process 11 (8,54%), verbal behaviour process 1 (0,78%), attributive relational process 4 (3,10%), identification relational process 5 (3,88%), existential process 4 (3,10%), and mental process 1 (0,78%). The dominance of material process showed that circular letter texts are generally constructed by verbs of material processes. One of the characteristics of legal grammar in the text was the lack of information about the participants who act as actors in the process.

**Keywords:** *Transitivity; Systemic Functional Linguistics; Circular Letter; Legal Text*

### **Introduction**

Legal regulation as a type of legal text has distinctive characteristics. The language used in the text of legal regulations is precise, unambiguous, and all-encompassing, and covering a specific legal scope as detailed as possible. (Berukstiene, 2017) indicates that legal language is formal and impersonal written style coupled with considerable complexity and length. Furthermore, the language of legal texts is wordy, unclear, pompous, redundant and dull.

Language in the context of legal regulations plays a role in describing and documenting the laws to ensnare or regulate the rights and obligations of the entity it regulates. Then, the language used in legal regulations can affect the reality of the entity. This happens because from the point of view of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) language is a tool to realize the social function of social processes in society with certain cultural values that exist in society (Halliday, 1985, 1989, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Language through lexicogrammar system communicates one's experience and carries out the

function of interaction between participants. Language contains events or situations in the world as well as social process.

The process of delivering experiences and events or situations in the world (clauses as representations) contained in the experiential metafunction, namely transitivity (Eggs, 2004). Transitivity analysis is a significant tool in the systemic-functional approach, which is an important perspective in analyzing legal language. Transitivity analysis can help investigate how people construe the experiential meaning in legal texts by analyzing the type of process, participants and context of the process.

This language phenomenon can be seen during the Covid-19 outbreak. Since Covid-19 outbreak, the government tried to reduce and to control the spread of Covid-19. As an example of legal regulations in regulating the behavior, circular letter about work from home policy was released to control the spread of covid-19 within ministries or agencies. Since then, the working behavior change from work from the office to work from home. It proves the Halliday's theory of language a tool to realize the social function.

Circular letter is an official document used by government to inform certain matter which is considered important and urgent to entity it regulates (Peranri No. 5 Tahun 2021 Pedoman Umum Tata Naskah Dinas, 2021). Even though circular letter is an official document, the information contained in the letter is used to regulate right and obligation of an entity which considers circular letter as legal text. Circular letter has distinctive linguistics feature, especially transitivity. The transitivity of legal language has not been widely studied by researchers, especially with a functional systemic linguistic perspective for example; (Saputra et al., 2022); (Siregar et al., 2021); (Khatimah et al., 2021); (Sinaga et al., 2020) and (Umam et al., 2018). Saputra et al. (2022) examines the transitivity process in the speech of Sri Mulyani, while Siregar et al. (2021) analyzes the transitivity of talks of Oliver Prass in KOMPAS TV to explore and to discover racism ideology through language representation in Critical Discourse Analysis research. Khatimah et al. (2021) examined The Law No. 30/2002 Regarding Corruption Eradication Commission. Then, Umam et al. (2018) conducted a study on transitivity of the Medina Charter. Meanwhile, Sinaga et al. (2020) examined the transitivity of the 1945 Constitution before the amendment. Legal text has a very broad scope and has not been fully studied with the SFL approach. Therefore, there is still plenty of room for exploration.

Based on review above, this research attempts to reveal the linguistics characteristics of circular letters as legal texts through transitivity analysis to explain the way circular letter deliver the message in achieving the goal. The analysis relies on transitivity analysis in systemic functional linguistics proposed by Halliday (1985) to see the transitivity pattern in the circular letter texts. The transitivity system that can reveal human social experience in linguistic representation by Halliday is called 'process'. (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) further divides the process into six types: material, verbal, mental, behavioral, relational, and existential. The six types of processes will be identified and described in the analysis process. This research will look at what processes are in the text. This research will enrich the repertoire of SFL studies, especially the transitivity aspect of circular letters legal texts.

## ***Methodology***

This is a descriptive-qualitative research (Moleong, 2005). This is a case study research (Yin, 2014) of transitivity contained in clause of circular letter text. This study uses documents as data sources in the form of five circular texts from the Ministry of Research and Technology/BRIN and the data used in this study is the lexicogrammar aspect in the form of transitivity. The data sources were selected based on purposive sampling, circulars with the theme of Covid-19 published during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic emergency, they are (1) Circular Letter of the Minister of Research and Technology/National Agency of Research and Technology Number 1/M/SE/2020 regarding the prevention of Corona Virus

Disease 2019 (Covid-19) within the Ministry of Research and Technology/Research Agency and National Innovation; (2) Circular Letter of the Secretary of Ministry/Primary Secretary, Ministry of Research and Technology/National Agency of Research and Technology Number B/06/A/SE/2020 regarding implementing office duties in preventing the spread Covid-19 within the Ministry of Research and Technology/National Research and Innovation Agency; (3) Circular Letter of the Minister of Research and Technology/National Agency of Research and Technology Number 9/M/SE/2020 regarding budget implementation to support work from home in the Context of Preventing Covid-19, (4) Circular Letter of the Minister of Research and Technology/National Agency of Research and Technology Number 15/M/SE/2020 regarding the regulation of working hours during the adaptation new normal order for employees of Ministry of Research and Technology/Research Agency of Research National Innovation; and (5) Circular Letter of the Minister of Research and Technology/National Agency of Research and Technology Number 16/M/SE/2020 regarding amendments to Circular Letter of the Minister of Research and Technology/National Agency of Research and Innovation Number 8/M/SE/2020 regarding and Number 14/M /SE/2020. Then, the data in this research is determined based on total sampling. The data in this study will be analysed using transitivity analysis. The analysis refers to the features of transitivity in systemic functional linguistics proposed by Halliday (1994).

## Result and Discussion

### Result

Process in transitivity consists of 6 types of process, namely material process (Mat), verbal process (V), behavioral process: mental behavioral (MB) and verbal behavioral (VB), relational process: relational attributive (RA) and relational identification (RI), existential process (E) and mental process (Me). Based on the result of analysis on the five texts, there found 129 processes spread across each text. The results of analysis are presented as follows.

Table 1 Tabulation of Transitivity Data of five Circular Letters

Text	Structures	Transitivity								$\Sigma$
		Mat	V	MB	VB	RA	RI	E	Me	
CL 1	LH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	NT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	RC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	LB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	C	35	2	2	1	-	-	2	-	42
	CL	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
	RT	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
CL 2	LH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	NT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	RC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	LB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	C	12	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	14
	CL	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	RT	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
CL 3	LH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	NT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	RC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	LB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	C	13	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	16
	CL	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	RT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0

CL 4	LH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	NT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	RC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	LB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	C	17	-	3	-	2	4	2	-	28
	CL	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
	RT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
CL 5	LH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	NT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	RC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	LB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	C	11	1	3	-	2	1	-	-	18
	CL	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
	RT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
$\Sigma$	93	10	11	1	4	5	4	1	129	
%	72,09	7,75	8,53	0,78	3,10	3,88	3,10	0,78		

**Note:** **CL** refers to circular letter. **H** refers to letterhead. **NT** refers to number and title of letter. **RC** refers to Recipient. **LB** refers to Legal Basis. **C** refers to Content. **CL** refers to Closing. **RT** refers to Ratification. **Mat** refers to material process. **V** refers to verbal process. **MB** refers to mental behavioral process. **VB** refers to verbal behavioral process. **RA** refers to attributive relational process. **RI** refers to identification relational process. **E** refers to existential process. **M** refers to mental process.

The table above is the tabulation of transitivity occurrence based on the structure of the text. Based on table 1, in text 1, there occurs 45 processes. In letterhead section, number and title of the letter section, recipient section, as well as the legal basis section, there is no process in those sections because they only contain a minor clause. Then, in content section, there occurs 35 material process, 2 verbal process, 2 mental behavioral process, 1 verbal behavioral process, and 2 existential process. In closing section, there are 2 verbal process. In ratification section, there is 1 material process.

In text 2, there occurs 16 process. In letterhead section, number and title of the letter section, recipient section, as well as the legal basis section, there is no process in those sections because they only contain a minor clause. Then, in content section, there occurs 112 material process, 1 verbal process, and 1 mental behavioral process. In closing section, there is 1 verbal process. In ratification section, there is 1 material process.

In text 3, there occurs 18 process. In letterhead section, number and title of the letter section, as well as recipient section, there is no process in those sections because they only contain minor clauses. In legal basis section, there is 1 mental process. Then, in content section, there occurs 13 material processes, 1 verbal process, and 2 mental behavioral processes. In closing section, there is 1 material process.

In text 4, there occurs 30 process. In letterhead section, number and title of the letter section, recipient section, and legal basis section there is no process because they only contain minor clause. Then, in content section, there are 17 material process, 3 mental behavioral process, 2 attributive relational process, 4 identifying relational process, and 2 existential process. In closing section, there is 1 material process, and 1 verbal process.

In text 5, there occurs 19 process. In letterhead section, number and title of the letter section, recipient section, as well as the legal basis section, there is no process in those section since they only contain minor clause. Then, in content section, there occurs 10 material process, 1 verbal process, 3

mental behavioral process, 2 attributive relational process, and 1 identification relational process. In closing section, there is 1 material process and 1 verbal process.

### Material Process

The material process is a process in which the participant performs a physical action. Material process can be in the form of an action or an event. The difference between action and event is the existence of a Goal. The material process of action has a Goal in the process, while the material process of events does not have a Goal. The participants of this process are actor, goal, range, and, beneficiary (recipient or client).

Table 2 Example of Material Process (action)

<b>Kepala Pusat Data dan Informasi</b>	<b>Menyiapkan</b>	<b>Sarana dan prasarana</b>
<i>Head of Data and Information Centre</i>	<i>Prepares</i>	<i>Facilities and infrastructure</i>
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Material Process</b>	<b>Goal</b>

Table 3 Example of Material Process (event)

<b>Wabah Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19)</b>	<b>Merebak</b>
<i>Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) outbreak</i>	<i>Is spreading</i>
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Material Process</b>

The clause in table 2 contains a material process of action (doing something). There are three participants in this clause. The first participant is Head of Data and Information Centre as an actor who commits an act through word prepares. The second participant is facilities and infrastructure as goal of the act.

The clause in table 3 contains a material process of an event. The participant in this clause is only Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) outbreak. Since it is a process of material of event, there is no goal in this clause.

### Verbal Process

Verbal process is a type of process that shows an activity of saying verbally without involving any action. The verbal process shows verbal communication activities, but is realized in the form of text. The participants in this process are the Sayer, the Verbiage, and the Receiver.

Table 4 Example of Verbal Process

<b>Kami</b>	<b>Menghimbau</b>	<b>Kepada seluruh jajaran pimpinan dan pegawai untuk:</b>
<i>We</i>	<i>Urge</i>	<i>All management and employees to:</i>
<b>Sayer</b>	<b>Verbal Process</b>	<b>Receiver</b>

The clause in table 4 contains a verbal process of action (doing something). There are two participants in this clause. The first participant is We or the person who writes the letter as sayer who commits the act through word urge. The second participant is all management and employees as receiver.

### Behavioral Process

Behavioral process is a process that demonstrate behavior, both physical and psychological. Behavioral process that contain physical and psychological properties will coincide with verbal process

and mental process. There are two types of behavioral process, mental behavioral process and verbal behavioral process. Mental behavioral process is a process that involve actions on mental process in performing material process. The participants in this process are Behavior, and Phenomenon. Behavior refers to participants who 'behave' and are generally conscious beings, while Phenomenon is an entity that undergoes a process. Verbal behavioral process is a process that involves actions on verbal in performing material process. The participants in this process are the Behavior, the Verbiage (something said), and the Receiver.

Table 5 Example of Mental Behavioral Process

<b>Pegawai</b>	<b>Menerapkan</b>	<b>Gaya hidup sehat</b>
<i>Employees</i>	<i>Implement</i>	<i>A healthy lifestyle</i>
<b>Behavior</b>	Mental Behavioral Process	Phenomenon

The clause in table 5 contains a mental behavioral process. There are two participants in this clause. The first participant is Employees as a behavior who commits an act through word implement. The second participant is a healthy lifestyle as a phenomenon.

### Relational Process

Relational process is a process to characterize and to identify something. The relational process is a process that shows the relationship between the intensity and the expansion of meaning. There are two types of relational process, Attributive relational process and Identification relational process. Attributive relational process is process of giving attribute. Participants in this process are Carrier and Attribute. Carrier is participant given attributes, while attribute refers to something which is attached to carrier. Identification relational process is a process identify something. This process connects two different entities. Participants in this process are Token and Value.

Table 6 Example of Attributive Relational Process

<b>Jam kerja bagi pegawai yang melaksanakan tugas kedinasan di rumah/tempat tinggal (Work from Home/WFH),</b>	<b>Tidak</b>	<b>Mengalam</b>	<b>Perubaha</b>
<i>Working hours for employees of Work from Home</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>not</i>	<i>changed</i>
<b>Carrier</b>	Attributive Relational Process		<b>Attribute</b>

Table 7 Example of Identification Relational Process

<b>Jam kerja bagi pegawai yang melaksanakan tugas kedinasan di kantor (Work from Office/WFO),</b>	<b>yaitu</b>	<b>Hari senin sampai Kamis....</b>
<i>Working hours for employees of Work from Home</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>Monday to Thursday</i>
<b>Token</b>	Identification Relational Process	<b>Value</b>

The clause in table 6 contains an attributive relational process. There are two participants in this clause. The first participant is Working hours for employees of Work from Home as a carrier which is attributed through word is not. The second participant is changed as a phenomenon.

The clause in table 7 contains an identification relational process. There are two participants in this clause. The first participant is Working hours for employees of Work from Home as a token which is identified through word is. The second participant is Monday to Thursday as a value.

### Existential Process

The existential process is a process that shows the existence of something. There is only one participant in this process, the existent.

Table 8 Example of Existential Process

<b>Dan</b>	<b>Apabila</b>	<b>Tidak</b>	<b>Terdapat</b>	<b>Indikasi sakit</b>
<i>and</i>	<i>if</i>	<i>There is no</i>		<i>symptoms</i>
<b>conj.</b>		Existential Process		Existent

The clause in tabel 8 contains an existential process. The only participant in this process is symptoms as an existent.

### Mental Process

The mental process is a process of sensing. Mental process is a process which reveal human activities involving the senses, perceptions, cognitions, desires, and emotions. This process occurs in a person's mind. Mental process does not involve any physical action at all. The participants involved in this process are the sensers or participant who thinks, or perceives and phenomenon which is what is thought, or what is felt or sensed.

Table 9 Example of Mental Process

<b>Kepala unit</b>	<b>Mempertimbangkan</b>	<b>Prinsip akuntabilitas</b>
<i>The head of unit</i>	<i>Consider</i>	<i>Accountability principle</i>
<b>Senser</b>	Mental Process	Phenomenon

The clause in table 9 contains a mental process. There are two participants in this clause. The first participant is the head of unit as a senser who commits act through word consider. The second participant is accountability principle as a phenomenon.

### Discussion

Legal text is a part of legal discourse. Broadly speaking, any text related to law can be considered as a legal text. Circular letter is an official document that contains notifications about certain things that are considered important and urgent (verse 1, chapter 10, Regulation of the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia Number 5 of 2021 concerning General Guidelines for Official Manuscripts). However, the information contained in a circular letter is used to regulate the behaviour of an entity since it contains the rights and obligations of the parties involved in it. Circular letters, in this case, have carried out a regulatory function.

The language used as a media of circular letter to regulate has its own characteristics as a legal language. It has distinctive characters and features. The characteristics of legal language lie in the specificity of the terms, composition, and style. The analysis of linguistic features using Systemic Functional Linguistics approach offers real evidence because it comes from the lexicogrammar.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a linguistics approach developed by MAK Halliday in the 1960s. SFL views language as a social semiotic system which is influenced by values and norms. SFL

relies on three metafunctions which work simultaneously in realizing the meaning of a text, namely ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational metafunction is divided into two, experiential and logical. The ideational aspect that deals with the representation of experience is called transitivity. This aspect realizes the meaning of experience of the world. It has 3 constituents: the process itself, the participants/actors involved in the process, and the Circumstances related to the process. Process is the essence of events in an experience. Each process will determine the type of participant. Participants are parties involved in the process. Circumstance is the physical and non-physical environment in the process.

In the aspect of transitivity, the experiential meaning is realized through the process in the clause. This transitivity plays an important role in providing an understanding of the events or processes that occur in the circular. This process serves to convey the things that will be conveyed in the circular letter. Each part of the GSP has a different character of the use of the process.

Based on table 1, it can be seen that the letterhead section, the number and title of the letter section, the recipient section and the legal basis section have no process since they only contain minor clauses. The process appears mostly in the content section, the closing section and the ratification section. Almost the entire process appears in the content section. It can be concluded that the essence or main topic of a circular letter is circulated and described in the content section. Therefore, most of the process is contained in the content section.

### **The Role of Processes in The Text**

Each process of material process, verbal process, mental behavioral process, verbal behavioral process, attributive relational process, identification relational process, existential process and mental process has certain role in conveying the information within the text depends on the characteristics of the process.

All material process occurs in the content section (93 material process) and dominates the total occurrence of process by 72,09%. It shows that most messages within circular letters are conveyed through the material process. Material process is a type of process that shows a human activity involving physical activity. Therefore, it can be said that the process or event that occur in the circular letter is process or event which involves physical human activity. Circular letters aim to inform readers about urgent matters. Therefore, the material process conveys message relating to these urgent matters. The reader or recipient is asked to do something according to the direction of the letter maker. This happens because the circular letter contains also directions, orders or instructions to do something as desired by the letter maker. Although the function of the circular is to provide information on urgent matters, in the end the information is used to regulate people's behavior in an institutional environment. One of the examples is shown below.

“Khusus untuk Pimpinan Tinggi Pratama (es.1) **harus hadir** ke kantor”

*Top Leader especially Head of Department **must go** to office...*

Clause above is an example in a circular letter talking about implementation of office tasks during pandemic in order to prevent the spread Covid-19 in the Ministry of Research and Technology/National Agency of Research and Innovation. In this letter, it contains information which manage the presence of officers in the office. The clause shows that Head of Department must attend to the office. **Must go** indicates that the letter maker has power to give order to the readers or recipient of the letter.

Verbal process occurs in content section (5 verbal process) and in closing section (5 verbal process). Verbal process in text shows the act of 'saying something' such as say, state, urge, etc from the letter maker to the recipient. Verbal process in content section occurs in the beginning of the section. It



has function to open the section. Meanwhile, verbal process in closing section has function to convey gratitude or thank you. One of the examples is shown below.

“Dalam rangka mendukung pelaksanaan tugas dan fungsi satuan kerja selama kebijakan bekerja dari rumah atau work from home (WFH), bersama ini kami **sampaikan** hal-hal sebagai berikut”

*In order to support the implementation of duties during the work from home (WFH) policy, we hereby **inform** several information:*

Clause above is an example of verbal process. We as the maker of the letter (Minister of Research and Technology) commits an act of saying by using verb convey to the recipients. Verbal process mostly appears in the first line of content section and in closing section.

Mental behavioral process occurs in content section (11 mental behavioral process). It shows the activity that involve mental process in performing material process. The message which conveyed through mental behavioral process is a demand for the reader to behave in particular way. It is used to regulate people's behavior in an institutional environment. One of the examples is shown below.

“Kepala Biro Keuangan dan Umum agar **mengatur** pembagian jadwal kedinasan bagi pegawai pengelola gedung, fasilitas pelayanan kepada Pimpinan, dan layanan operasional lainnya.”

*The Head of the Finance and General Bureau **arrange** the official schedule for management employees, service facilities employees, and other operational services employees.*

Clause above is an example of mental behavioral process. The Head of the Finance and General Bureau as the recipient of the letter must do an action which involves mental process in material process.

Attributive relational process (4 process) and Identification relational process Relational process (5 process) occurs in content section. Attributive relational process in the content section is used to give something or carrier an attribute. Based on the findings in the content section, attributive relational process shows the changing of certain condition due to covid-19 outbreak. Meanwhile identification relational process in the content section is used identify something or token. Existential process in the content section (4 process) is used to conveyed message related to the symptom of Covid-19. Mental process 1 is used to shows an activity of thinking of a recipient.

## **Conclusion**

The text of the circular letters contains information, explanations and/or instructions on how to carry out certain things which are considered important and urgent. The subject matter in the text of the circular is generally conveyed using material process in content section. The average percentage of process occurrence in circular text is Material process 93 (72,09%), verbal process 10 (7,75%), mental behaviour process 11 (8,54%), verbal behaviour process 1 (0,78%), attributive relational process 4 (3,10%), identification relational process 5 (3,88%), existential process 4 (3,10%), and mental process 1 (0,78%). Circular letter also contains directions, orders or instructions to do something as desired by the letter maker. It is proven by the number of clauses that contain directives or orders for recipient to do something in the form of a material process. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach can be used to reveal circular letters as legal texts to see one of the linguistic features contained in the text, transitivity. SFL approach can describe the reality of the world through the lexicogrammar system which represents the social process.

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