

THE METAFUNCTIONS REVEALED: EFL LEARNERS' EXPERIENCE IN MAKING SENSE OF THE TEXT

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Abstract: This study was primarily intended to capture the English as foreign language learners' (henceforth EFL learners) experience in making sense of the text: to what extent the meaning-making elements of the texts are comprehended and interpreted by EFL learners as readers. The investigation itself was centered around the notion of metafunctions – ideational, interpersonal, and textual – of the text for several reasons. This study tries to reveal how EFL learners make sense of the two selected articles taken from “*The Jakarta Post*” entitled “Australia Stops Some Cattle Exports to Indonesia” and “Australia’s ban on Cattle Exports to RI Political”. The two articles were downloaded from *thejakartapost.com* in June 2011. The main reason why newspaper articles were chosen was because, as Lehtonen (2006) puts it, “newspaper descriptions of reality are always produced from a certain perspective”. In the context of this study, the two groups of respondents were involved: two respondents who have not taken Functional Grammar class (group one) and two respondents who have attended functional grammar class (group two). The four respondents are English Department students at one private university in Kuningan, West Java. The study shows that reading is not simply a matter of recognizing the alphabetical orders of the texts. Reading is, in fact, a discursive activity which is influenced by the previous textual experiences. The quality of interpretation is always affected by the background knowledge of readers, the ability in recognizing the features of the texts, and, of course, the ability to identify the metafunctions of the texts. An interaction with a discourse will automatically generate a new discourse. The reading of particular texts will in turn trigger the reading (and the discussion and analysis) of the other texts.

Key words: metafunctions, meaning making, metacognitive system, subculture

Abstrak: Penelitian ini ditujukan untuk menangkap pengalaman pemelajar Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing dalam memahami makna bacaan: sejauh mana elemen pengungkap makna bacaan dipahami dan diinterpretasikan oleh pemelajar sebagai pembaca. Kajian ini difokuskan pada *metafunctions* – *ideational*, *interpersonal*, dan *tekstual* – pada bacaan untuk beberapa alasan. Studi ini berupaya untuk mengungkap bagaimana pemelajar mengungkap makna dua artikel yang diambil dari “The Jakarta

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Post” berjudul “Australia Stops Some Cattle Exports to Indonesia” dan “Australia’s ban on Cattle Exports to RI Political”. Kedua artikel tersebut diunduh dari *thejakartapost.com* pada bulan Juni 2011. Alasan utama kenapa artikel-artikel tersebut dipilih adalah karena, sebagaimana dinyatakan oleh Lehtonen (2006), “deskripsi koran akan realitas selalu diproduksi dengan sebuah perspektif tertentu”. Studi ini melibatkan dua grup responden: dua responden yang belum mengambil kelas tata bahasa fungsional (grup satu) dan dua responden yang telah mengambil kelas tata bahasa fungsional (grup dua). Keempat responden adalah para Mahasiswa Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di salah satu universitas swasta di Kuningan, Jawa Barat. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa membaca bukanlah sekedar mengenali urutan kata dalam teks. Faktanya, membaca adalah aktivitas rumit yang dipengaruhi oleh pengalaman tekstual sebelumnya. Kualitas intepretasi selalu dipengaruhi oleh pengetahuan awal pembaca, kemampuan dalam mengenali ciri-ciri bacaan, dan kemampuan untuk mengidentifikasi *metefunctions* bacaan. Kegiatan membaca bacaan tertentu akan memicu kegiatan membaca (dan diskusi serta analisis) bacaan lainnya.

Kata kunci: metafungsi, penciptaan makna, sistem metacognitive, subbudaya

This study was primarily intended to capture the English as foreign language learners’ (henceforth EFL learners) experience in making sense of the text: to what extent the meaning-making elements of the texts are comprehended and interpreted by EFL learners as a reader. The investigation itself was centered around the notion of metafunctions – ideational, interpersonal, and textual – of the text for several reasons. Firstly, the meaning potentials of the text (s) are naturally generated by the metafunctions (Jones and Locke 2011; O’Keeffe 2006). As Halliday (1985; 1994) puts it, the three metafunctions of the text are simultaneously constructed, hence stressing out that the three of them has to be fully incorporated and interpreted as whole in a reading activity. Secondly, the analysis of the metafunctions can help the students become a better reader as, by its very nature, reading is a matter of meaning making. Therefore, it is direly important for students (as readers) to explore the meaning potentials embedded in the texts. The analysis on metafunctions is thus seen as an effort to discover the meaning potentials of the texts. In addition, Lehtonen (2000) suggests that to understand a text (as a sign and a discourse), one has to produce meaning in the form of analysis. Thirdly, the analysis on metafunctions will generate a very basic idea that a single text is always read and interpreted differently by different readers. This notion will help EFL learners to realize that they have a freedom of some sort to be a reader; they are free to decide which texts to read, to interpret the texts in some preferred way, and to use the texts for particular purposes.

This study was principally inspired by the works of Zwan and Singer in Graesser, Gernsbacher, and Goldman (2008) entitled “Text Comprehension”; Grimshaw’s work entitled “Genres, Registers, and Contexts of Discourse (2008); Simons and Murphy’s work on “Spoken Language Strategies and Reading Acquisition” in Cook-Gumperz (2006); Collins and Michaels’ work on “Speaking and Writing: Discourse Strategies (2006). Zwan and Singer addressed a basic premise about text comprehension: how people convert the

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proverbial black marks on white paper to “stories in their heads”. The emphasis of the premise is that changing alphabetical letters into a meaningful storyline is a complicated matter for anyone who reads. Therefore, reading is seen as a mental activity which incorporates a complicated metacognitive system. One can only understand a text only if he/she sees the alphabetical letters as a symbol which represents something.

In “Genres, Registers, and Contexts of Discourse”, Grimshaw emphasizes that to explore the realm of meanings inherently generated in text-reader interaction and, one has to see the text as a discourse. He distinguishes two fundamental perspectives of discourse. The first perspective sees discourse as spoken or written text in language, intended for use in the accomplishment of social ends of users (speakers, hearers, writers, readers). Meanwhile, the second perspective sees discourse as something like an ideological “bundle”, a subculture, or even an arena of special interaction. Consequently, some prominent discourses are quite well-known to us: the discourse of feminism, environmentalism, individualism, sexism, and so on and so forth. Grimshaw suggests that one has to see any text with these two perspectives, meaning that a text, any single text, is ideological in nature. In other words, as Lehtonen (2000) puts it, texts are not “natural, but produced by effort; that is, fabricated. A vital issue raised here is, therefore, how is the “fabricatedness” of a text scrutinized by learners as readers.

In the work of Simons and Murphy (2006), a central issue related to text comprehension is raised: one needs to be fully aware of the differences between spoken and written discourse. Therefore, communication in oral and written language is different in multiple ways. While speech tends to be multi-channeled, including lexical-semantic-syntactic, interactional, paralinguistic and nonverbal modes of transmission, while writing is most often unimodal, depending heavily on the lexical-semantic-syntactic channel. In this case, it seems that interacting with written texts are much more challenging rather than interacting in a spoken discourse. Meanings tend to be more implicit in a written discourse, therefore requiring reader to make more efforts to comprehend the text.

Simons and Murphy (ibid) assert that a strong familiarity with a wide variety of text has to be established as early as possible. This is intended to sharpen their ability in navigating the text by using their ‘metadiscourse’ or ‘signaling devices’ that writers normally use in their works. The signaling features include phrases or topics that mark topics or convey information about the function of sentences they introduce (*for example, for instance, in summary, briefly*) that establish the relationships between ideas and events (*moreover, subsequently, however, in contrast*), that remind readers of material presented earlier (*again....As I explained before*), that mark the organization of the text (*first, second, thirdly*), that explain or interpret (*parenthetical expressions, definitions*), and that signal such glossing (*in other words, that is to say*), that mark attitudes (*happily, unfortunately*), as well as features that directly index segments of written texts (*see below, Chapter one introduces, In this section*). A good reader, therefore, can maximize the presence of these features in comprehending the texts.

Lastly, the work of Collins and Michaels was focused on how thematic cohesion was signaled by young children in both spoken and written discourse. Eight oral and four written narratives were analyzed in this yearlong ethnographic study. It was found that the respondents made use of nominal as opposed to verbal complements; the use of prosodic features in spoken discourse intended to signal definiteness. The researchers finally concluded that a great deal of efforts needs to be made for a successful transition from speaking to writing. From the four previous studies above, a general conclusion can be drawn: reading and writing require a command of certain sign systems. Without the ability to recognize the discourse features – spoken and written – it is almost unlikely that one can be a good reader.

Reading the Texts, Exploring the Metafunctions

A classical question was triggered when this study was in its infancy: When do we start reading a book? This question was also probed by Lehtonen (2000). A simple but inspiring answer was discovered: reading starts much earlier. Reading doesn't start when we reach the first actual page of the text. The start doesn't happen as we open the book. Lehtonen emphasizes that the formation of meanings starts when we perceive a book as an object. Lehtonen (2000 p. 66) says:

As objects have many qualities, which include the binding, the size of the text, the type, the layout of the pages, and the age of the book. These material qualities of objectified texts are anything but secondary to the formation of meanings. Actually nothing about the book is innocent: everything means something. Even the book's immediate qualities communicate something to the reader – is it a hardback or a pocket book, thin or thick, illustrated or not – the thickness of pages and the smallness of its font may convey that the book is so-called serious, whereas its large size may signify that it is a reference book or a children's picture book.

The initial formation of meanings is also largely influenced by reader's expectations and background knowledge. The expectations produced in reader's mind are commonly related to the topics of the text, the kinds of information depicted in the texts, and the types of evaluation presented by the writer/author of the texts. The formations of meanings continued as the first page of the texts – books, newspapers, magazines, academic journals, etc – are opened. In the perspective of Functional Grammar, some procedures of reading are designed to (1) help students how grammar is used in particular contexts; (2) explore how grammatical choices are meaningful choices; (3) practice using these resources to make meaning (Jones and Locke 2011).

The reading procedures offered by Jones and Locke imply that students need to be aware that texts live within contexts; that grammaticalization of the texts is a matter of choice; that grammar is the resource for making meanings. In other words, meaning generation is the sole purpose of interacting with texts. In the light of Functional Grammar, three types of meanings are simultaneously constructed within the text itself: (1) ideational meanings, which include experiential and logical meanings; (2) interpersonal meaning; (3) and textual meaning (Eggs 1994; Gerot and Wignell 1994; Halliday 1985). The three metafunctions are grammaticalised in nature by the writer/author to meet particular purposes.

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The first metafunction, the ideational, is what Eggins call the carrier of the content of the talk. Every human experience is stored and represented in ideational metafunction. The grammatical system which realizes the ideational metafunction is what we call transitivity system. This system is related to the first dimension register called Field, which basically generates the topic (s) of the text. Simply stated, topic recognition of the text is an essential part of the ideational metafunction as well as the context of situation called Field.

Transitivity system is principally realized in three elements: (1) participants; (2) process types; and (3) circumstances (Eggins 1994; Gerot and Wignell 1994; Halliday 1994). *Participant* refers to the name (s) of specific names or things as apparent in the clause. *Process types* refers to the types of verbs used in the texts (material, relational, mental, behavioral, existential), and *circumstances* commonly refers to specific places and times which occur in the beginning or the end of the clause.

The second metafunction, the interpersonal, is related to the second dimension of context of situation called Tenor – the types of human interaction e.g. customer/clerk, teacher/student/doctor/patient and their attitudinal description to each other –. Interpersonal metafunction is fundamentally realized through the system of *mood* and *modality*. The first refers to the forms of the clauses – declarative, interrogative, imperative –, while the second refers to the degree of commitment of the speaker/writer and hearer/reader towards the things he/she says. The modal verbs such as *must*, *can*, and *should* definitely depict different degrees of obligation.

The grammar of interpersonal meanings, as Eggins says, fundamentally depicts the power realization between the interactants of the discourse. The dimension of social power can be traced from the speech functions and the speech roles fulfilled by each interactant. The discourse domination can, therefore, be measured from the stretches of exchanges and the mood choices produced by the speaker/writer and hearer/reader. In other words, interpersonal metafunction addresses these realm of meanings: (1) the power or solidarity of the relationships between the interactants; (2) the extent of their intimacy; (3) their degree of familiarity with each other; (4) and their attitudes and judgments’.

Lastly, the grammar of textual metafunction is the realization of the third context of situation called Mode – the channel of communication (spoken or written). Systemicists are concerned with the difference between spoken and written discourse. This is chiefly triggered by the very fact that different discourse mode possess different textures and features. Therefore, readers are required to explore the realm of meanings of different modes in a different fashion. The grammar of textual meaning is chiefly realized within the theme-rheme system. Theme is what occurs in the beginning of the clause. It is usually apparent in the Subject and Finite of the clause, while rheme is what occurs after the theme. In “Shasha reads a picture book”, for instance, Shasha is the (unmarked topical) theme, while “reads a picture book” serves as the rheme. A reader needs to be completely aware of the types of themes constructed by the author so that he/she can mark out the given/new information rooted in a clause.

From the explanation above, a fundamental conclusion can be drawn: meanings are essentially grammaticalized. Every grammatical choice is thus meaningful to serve particular discourse purposes. By carefully considering this, one can thus take a critical stance towards the texts. In relation to critical reading practices, as suggested by Lehtonen (2000), the notion of metafunctions can be combined with a critical attitude, which is realized in the following questions: (1) why is something or why does it happen? (2) What is its purpose? (3) Whose interest does it serve? (4) Whose interest does it contradict? (5) How does it work? (6) Can it be or work only in the way it is or does, or could it work better in some other way. This study attempted to present the analysis with the nuances of Functional Grammar and the critical reading practices.

METHODOLOGY

This study investigated how EFL learners make sense of the two selected articles taken from “The Jakarta Post” entitled “Australia Stops Some Cattle Exports to Indonesia” and “Australia’s ban on Cattle Exports to RI Political”. The two articles were downloaded from thejakartapost.com in June 2011. The main reason why newspaper articles were chosen was because, as Lehtonen (2006) puts it, “newspaper descriptions of reality are always produced from a certain perspective”. In the context of this study, the two groups of respondents were involved: two respondents who have not taken Functional Grammar class (group one) and two respondents who have attended functional grammar class (group two). The four respondents are English Department students at one private university in Kuningan, West Java.

One of the vital issues to explore in this study is that whether the four respondents can explore the perspective (s) constructed by the authors of the articles and whether they can fabricate their own perspectives when they are responding to the two selected texts. In order to investigate the perspectives of the respondents, two research questions were formulated: (1) to what extent does the knowledge of SFG (and the text), particularly the notion of metafunctions, help students in making sense of the text? (2) to what extent does the knowledge of SFG (and the text) enhance students’ critical awareness towards the text? The term metafunction is indeed a very specific term, and can only be understood by those who are familiar with Functional Grammar. In the context of this study, however, the term is generalized into a simple explanation: ideational metafunction can be perceived as how the topics and events depicted in the articles; interpersonal metafunctions are perceived as the participants’ interaction in the text; and textual metafunction as how the information is structured with relevance to the notion of theme-rheme.

In order to reveal the metafunctions of the texts, the four respondents are equipped with five guiding questions: (1) How are the two titles constructed by the authors? (2) How are the events portrayed in the two articles? (3) How are the people represented in the articles? (4) How do the authors evaluate the events depicted in the two selected articles? (5) How are the events concluded in the events? To further investigate the respondents’ responses towards the text, one additional question was probed: How do you make sense of the text? For the

flexibility of the study the respondents were required to write their responses in a piece of paper and were given a freedom to respond to the text.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Locating the Metafunctions in the Texts

The four respondents taking part in this study produced different responses towards the two selected texts. The five guiding questions which were used in an attempt to locate the traces of metafunctions in the text seem to be interpreted in a various ways. The analysis in this section is focused on how the four respondents “survived” in an attempt to make sense of the texts. Engaging in reading activity is fundamentally a matter of survival. Different readers make use of different approaches and reading strategies when dealing with the texts, and the unique but a common thing is they also come up with different interpretations. Those who survived are those who have a meaningful interaction with the texts and have the ability to search for the meanings hidden behind the texts.

The complexity of readers' to texts, as suggested by Smith (2003) and Lehtonen (2000), are not defined by the text itself; but also by readers' own position: their entire resources of textual and non-textual knowledge and experience. The textual experiences of the respondents are thus something personal. Different capacity of knowledge and (previous) experiences determine readers' current and future textual interpretations. This study captured the differences as follow. Responses on the first guiding questions: “How are the titles of articles constructed by the authors?” This initial question was intended to identify whether the respondents take the title for granted. A title can mean a lot as it doesn't only tell us the topic of the texts, but also it leads us to trace the realm of meanings of the texts. Table 1 captured how the respondents made sense of the titles (#R is for respondent).

#R	Responses on Text 1	Responses on Text 2
#R1	The title is well-constructed and it reveals the topic of the text	The author believes that the issue is political, the reason is unmentioned.
#R2	The title is more “neutral” as it merely tells us “what happened”	The use of the word “political” hides some reasons and facts
#R3	The title is in declarative form which bears a perspective that the issue is crucial to address; “stop” is a material process which indicate an even has already occurred.	The title is a phrasal form, which is speculative and consists of pros and cons
#R4	The title is in declarative mood, which tells us that something factual is happening already	The title seems to be intended as Indonesian government's responses on the banning of the live cattle from Australia

Table 1: Respondents' Responses on the First Guiding Questions

From Table 1, it seems that the three respondents (R2, R3 and R4) have, to some extents, a somewhat critical manner towards the titles of the texts. This is evidenced from their

responses. #R2 believes that the title of text 1 “Australia Stops Some Cattle Export to Indonesia” is more neutral compared to the title of the second text “Australia’s ban on Cattle Exports to RI Political”. This might be true as, in the light of interpersonal metafunction, the use of declarative mood in a clause seems to be neutral if it only tells us what happened. In the second text the title is in the same declarative mood, but the use of the word ‘political’ bears an implication that the author of the text has initially laid his position concerning the issues to be raised in the text.

#R3 and #R4 basically possess the same analytical position with #R2. The only difference that can be found here is that #R2 doesn’t specifically use grammatical term called “declarative mood” but she can sense that the titles of the texts negotiate different initial meaning formations. Both #R3 and #R4 used the grammatical term “declarative mood” but they interpreted the titles differently. #R3 sees that the declarative mood serves to lay the perspective of the author regarding the issue. The perspective of the author implicitly says that the issue of cattle ban to RI is crucial. This is also supported with the use of the word “stop” in the title. #R3 defines the word “stop” as material process. In responding to the title of the second text #R3 sees the title as containing the pros and cons and definitely speculative. She probably sees no reason why Indonesian government has to protest against Australian government regarding the cattle exports ban to Indonesia. #R3, however, seems to make a mistake when she thinks that the title is written in the phrasal form. #R4, on the other hand, believes that the use of declarative mood in the first text is intended to the reader that something factual is happening already. Meanwhile, #R4 says that the use declarative in the second text functions to tell us that there is a sense of urgency for Indonesian government to quickly make some formal reactions towards the cattle export ban.

The three mentioned respondents, #R2, #R3, #R4, has in part revealed the interpersonal metafunction as they mostly talk about the meaning potential of the title: “neutral” vs “not neutral” or containing some messages. #R1, the only respondent who seemed to fail in critically understand the title, didn’t provide any textual evidences in his written responses. The “well-constructedness” of the titles is left unexplained. In the case of responses to the second guiding question, “How are the events portrayed in the articles?” three respondents – #R3, #R4, #R5 – seem to have a basic understanding on the system of transitivity. However, they seem to provide an in-depth look at the process types and circumstances as evidenced in the clauses in the texts. Both the second and third guiding questions are fundamentally probed to reveal the experiential metafunction, which is also termed as the clause as representation. The three elements of the transitivity system – participants, process types, and circumstances – are, in nature, constructing the events. Therefore, when a topic is presented these three elements will also be delivered.

In responding to the question of the portrayal of events, #R1 only wrote that the events in the first text are chronologically portrayed with no explanation on the types of events described in the texts. He also wrote that the events portrayed in the second texts are justified by the author. The justification on the event, are unfortunately, not exemplified. The rest of the respondents, in contrast, wrote that in the first text the events which become the focus of

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interest of the author is the cruelty of Indonesian abattoirs and the unbelievably suffering animals. Slightly different responses on the second text are found. #R2 and #R4 believes that the focus is on Australia's cunning cattle export policy to Indonesia; 3R3 sees that some events are depicted to strengthen Indonesian position in the Australian cattle export.

From the responses on the second guiding question, it can be concluded that the respondents can trace the events depicted in the text. This will, in turn, help them to truly understand what is really going on the texts. Without a proper understanding on the topic as well the events, it is almost unlikely that one can reach a critical comprehension on the texts. In other words, when one is able to discover the topics and locate the traces of events depicted in the texts, s/he is to be said to have revealed the ideational metafunctions. The students' responses on the second guiding question can be traced in Table 2 below.

#R	Responses on Text 1	Responses on Text 2
#R1	The events are portrayed chronologically and can be accepted by our senses	The events are justified by the author
#R2	The portrayal of events is focused on Indonesian abattoirs' cruelty and the suffering of the animals	The portrayal of events is focused on the Australia's cunning cattle trade policy
#R3	Some events are highlighted in the texts: animal cruelty, the reactions of the banning	Some events are described to strengthen Indonesian position in the trading
#R4	Some events are highlighted: the cruelty of the Indonesian abattoirs; the video of the slaughter is publicized; some reactions are evident	The focus is on why Indonesia protested Australian 'cunning' live cattle policy

Table 2: Respondents' Responses on the Second Guiding Questions

Still in an attempt to reveal the experiential metafunction, the four respondents were guided to make written responses on the people/participants described in the texts. The four respondents are able to identify the key participants in the texts. In the first take, for example, #R2 and #R3 identified Charles Armstrong as the ones who generated the idea to stop the live cattle to Indonesia, while #R4 mentions more prominent figures as evidenced in the text: The Minister of Australian Agriculture Joe Ludwig, independent reviewer in this special case Lyn White, and a prominent RSCPA scientist Bidda Jones. Meanwhile, #R1 only wrote that the participants are portrayed clearly without mentioning the names of the specific participants. In the case of the second text, in contrast, all participants agreed that there is only one well-known figure portrayed: Herman Khaeron, the House of Agriculture Deputy.

From the examples shown in table 2 above and table 3 below, a simple conclusion can be drawn: the ideational and experiential metafunction can be traced by the four respondents by taking a careful look at the names of specific participants and number of events depicted in the texts. However, two things are missing from the analysis. None of the respondents took into account the circumstances – names of places, specific times, and other adverbs-related terms – and the quotations in the texts. In critically understanding a text, one needs to carefully consider who are mostly quoted in the texts and how it affects the opinions and the perspectives of the author (s).

#R	Responses on Text 1	Responses on Text 2
#R1	The participants are portrayed clearly	The main participant highlighted is Herman Khaeron
#R2	The main figure represented is Joe Ludwig and Charles Armstrong who declared the cruelty of Indonesian abattoirs	The main figure in the text is Herman Khaeron, who is skeptical with Australia's politically triggered trade policy
#R3	Influential people in Australian cattle trading are represented as the ones who proposed the halt of the trading	Only one person quoted
#R4	Trustable participants are mentioned: Minister of Agriculture, Joe Ludwig, independent reviewer, Lyn White, and RSCPA chief scientist Bidha Johnes	Two main participants are depicted: the member of the house of representative and house of agriculture deputy, Herman Khaeron

Table 3: Respondents' Responses on the Third Guiding Questions

As briefly discussed above, a critical reader needs to consider the perspectives of the authors on the issues presented in the text. This is intended to establish a perspective comparison between the reader and the authors as a part of meaning negotiation. In Bakhtin's point of view, meaning is negotiated and it doesn't stand in solitude. From table 4 below, it seems that the four respondents found a difficulty in identifying how the authors evaluate the texts. #R1, in responding to the first text, wrote that there is no direct evaluation. He probably thinks that the author evaluated in an implicit way, but he couldn't identify the evaluation. When he responded to the second text, he provided textual evidence from the question probed by Herman Khaeron. This can be regarded as #R1's strategy to identify the evaluation offered by the author.

#R2, in contrast, uses different strategy in identifying the author's perspective. She believed that the authors in both texts build their perspectives in the portrayal of the main events in the two text: animal cruelty in the first text and Australian cunning cattle trading policy. In this case, #R2 assumes that the way events are portrayed in the text is a means to establish authors' perspective. Different responses are also presented by #R3 and #R4. #R3 wrote that the author in the first text doesn't explicitly state his point of view, so no evaluation can be found. Meanwhile, she said that the author in the second text evaluates the events clearly and he laid his arguments well. No further explanations are found to support this interpretation. #R4, on the contrary, believes that, from the way things are organized in the first text, the author fundamentally tries to emphasize that the issue is crucial and needs to be solved as soon as possible. In responding to the second text, #R4 wrote that the point of view of the author is represented in the data presented in the text.

From this simple analysis, it can be concluded that readers tend to use different strategies in identifying the authors' point of view. This might be triggered by the fact that authors tend to construct their point of view in an implicit manner. A hardwork needs to be done in capturing the authors' point of view and their purpose in producing certain texts. Respondents' responses on the fourth guiding questions are recorded in table 4 below.

#R	Responses on Text 1	Responses on Text 2
#R1	No direct evaluation from the author	An evaluation is represented in a quotation from Herman “that’s the way to kill what other ways are there?”
#R2	The author focuses the evaluation on “animal cruelty”	The author focuses the evaluation on Australia’s cattle trading policy
#R3	The author’s point of view is not explicitly stated	The author evaluates the events in the text and his arguments clearly
#R4	The author implicitly says that the issue is very crucial	The author’s point of view is represented in the data as evidenced in the text

Table 4: Respondents’ Responses on the Fourth Guiding Questions

In responding to the fifth guiding questions, the four respondents demonstrated different interpretations. #R1 wrote that the author of the first text concluded the text by mentioning two participants: Janelle Saffin and Kelvin Thompson. Those people are who proposed the banning of live export cattle to Indonesia. However, #R1 believed that there is no explicit conclusion found in the second text. Different strategies are used in identifying the conclusion by the rest of respondents: #R2 wrote that the authors of the two texts made a conclusion by stating the reason of the cases; #R3 made a personal conclusion on the texts; and #R4 wrote that the events of the two texts are related to each other. He made no specific explanation on the conclusion made by the authors. By mentioning that the two texts are closely related to each other, #R4 is actually drawing an understanding on the notion of intertextuality, but still, he has failed in identifying the how the events are concluded.

#R	Responses on Text 1	Responses on Text 2
#R1	The events are concluded by describing two main figures in the banning of the cattle: Janelle Saffin and Kelvin Thompson	No explicit conclusions are found
#R2	The author concluded the text by focusing on the reason of the cattle banning: animal cruelty	The author concluded the text by focusing on the political reason of the banning: to increase Indonesia’s dependence on Australian cattle
#R3	Personal conclusion (not authors’ conclusion): Australian’s “selfishness” should be well-interpreted	Personal opinion: I agree with the author’s point of view
#R4	Intertextuality: The events in the two texts are related to each other	

Table 5: Respondents’ Responses on the Fifth Guiding Questions

Lastly, some interesting responses are found in table 6. The responses made in this table are answers to the additional guiding question: “how do you make sense of the text?” This question needs to be asked to the respondents to find out their preferred strategies in making sense of the texts. #R1 focuses his explanation on topic development and authors’ intention. He also addressed the notion of cohesion and coherence, which is missing from this present study. #R2 uses different strategy by providing a problem solution to the problem; #R3 focuses her explanation on what she does before reading the texts and making some initial attempts to construct her point of view; and #R4 wrote that he focused on the titles of the texts

before taking a close reading on the text and takes some skimming efforts and marked some events.

From the explanation above it can be concluded that the four respondents employ different strategies in reading the texts. The most-frequently used strategies are using their background knowledge, setting up a point of view and a textually oriented meaning formation such as taking a closer look at the titles and marking the features of the texts. All the discussions presented here simply refer to what Lehtonen (2000) says, “Reading is a subjective experience”. It doesn’t matter how we arrive at the meaning of the text. What matters is how we develop our reading strategies in order to enrich our textual experiences. Students responses on the last question are recorded in table 6.

#R	Responses on Text 1	Responses on Text 2
#R1	The topic development is well constructed and the topic itself is supported by the facts; the cohesion across the sentence is good	Focus on the authors’ intention: the authors required the reader to take a critical stances towards the issue
#R2	Problem solving: Australian government must withdraw its cattle-trading policy and have a talk with Indonesian government on the betterment of the slaughter standard.	
#R3	I focus on the titles before reading the texts, then I focus on some events depicted in the texts; I also use my point of view in order to make sense of the texts	
#R4	I usually take a careful look at the titles before deciding to read the first paragraph of the texts; I skimmed some names in the texts; and carefully marked some events	

Table 6: Respondents’ Responses on the Additional Guiding Question

From the analysis above several conclusions can be drawn: (1) Ideational and interpersonal metafunction tend to be easily located by respondents though they cannot identify the specific process types and circumstances; (2) textual metafunctions seem to be laid somewhere inside in the deep structure of the texts so that none of the respondents could say something about it; (3) Knowledge on Functional Grammar have, to some extent, developed students awareness in exploring the texts e.g. taking a closer look at the titles, marking some quotations and highlighting some specific participants in the texts, etc; (4) respondents make use of different strategies in making sense of the texts e.g. utilizing one’s personal background knowledge, making inferences from the titles of the texts, providing a problem solving approach towards the issues raised in the texts, and utilizing intertextuality approach. The varied responses generated in this study indicate that the same texts are interpreted differently and that meaning is negotiated in every discursive activity. The realm of meaning is thus always challenging to explore.

CONCLUSION

What this recent study shows, then, is that reading is not simply a matter of recognizing the alphabetical orders of the texts. Reading is, in fact, a discursive activity which is influenced by the previous textual experiences. The quality of interpretation is always affected by the background knowledge of readers, the ability in recognizing the features of the texts, and, of

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course, the ability to identify the metafunctions of the texts. An interaction with a discourse will automatically generate a new discourse. The reading of particular texts will in turn trigger the reading (and the discussion and analysis) of another texts. Therefore, interacting with a discourse is a recursive activity (van Leeuwen 2008; Machin and van Leeuwen 2007; Talbot 2007). We human are moving from one discourse to another discourse during our entire life. One important lesson from this recent study is that, as Lehtonen (2000) puts it, studying texts is matter of studying our lives. We can never be apart from texts as texts are part of our daily lives. Lehtonen further emphasizes that the vital issue that needs to be raised, especially in the texts-related teaching practices, is “how texts are contained in or become linked with the ever-changing kaleidoscope of daily lives”.

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