



LIFE AND DEATH IN ANDERSEN'S "GRANDMOTHER": A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Hans Christian Andersen's "Grandmother" is a well-written short story about life and death. The analysis of the story using Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) reveals the meaning and ideology which the writer expresses through the work. In the ideational metafunction, the story uses the material and relational processes the most. The use of the two processes presents the grandmother and her character vividly and clearly. In the interpersonal metafunction, the sentences mostly use grandmother, she, and other objects related to her as the subject. The use shows how meaningful the grandmother to her granddaughter, the narrator, is. Furthermore, the change of the tense also indicates the significant transformation of the grandmother. Finally, in the textual metafunction, though low, the use of marked themes emphasizes the life phases of the grandmother. The analysis of the text using SFG reveals the centrality of life and death in the story. The analysis of the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions of the text reveals well the meaning and ideology which the story conveys. Death is only a transform of a life to another life.

INTRODUCTION

Hans Christian Anderson's "Grandmother" is a story about a child's adoration of his or her late grandmother. The story shows how the child adores her and recalls his sweet moments with her. The story consists of 4 paragraphs and a total of 30 sentences. The first paragraph is about the narrator's sweet memory of her grandmother, the second about her death, the third about grave, and the last about life and death.

This paper is a study of the story "Grandmother" (Andersen, 2010, pp. 365-367) using *Systemic Functional Grammar* or SFG (Thompson, 2014; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Eggins, 2004). SFG views an event or state as a personal experience which is, then, expressed in a clause or sentence. The choice of the predicate verb and the participants, the choice of the subject and predicate form, and the arrangement of words employ the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions of language.

The aim of the study is to discover the meaning or ideology that the writer conveys in the story and to appreciate of the story as a piece of children literature. As Andersen is a famous fairy tale writer and his works have been translated into many languages, his stories must contain a certain meaning or ideology which people can readily accept and the stories must be written well.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is a discourse analysis with Systemic Function Grammar (Thompson, 2014; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Eggins, 2004) as the approach. The object of the study is a fairytale entitled "Grandmother" by Andersen (2010, pp. 365-367) as the object of the study. To analyze the story, SFG is used as SFG is a grammar which aims to reveal the meaning of a text (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Eggins, 2004). This research studies the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions of the language which are used to convey the meaning of the story. It identifies the transitivity processes that the writer uses to

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construct the story and the reasons of the choice of the processes. It also analyzes the mood of the story, the choice of the subjects, and the marked themes in the story.

The use of SFG to study a text meaning is not uncommon. A number of studies have been conducted using the all the three metafunctions (Chen W. , 2018; Wang, 2010) or just the ideational metafunction (Alaei & Ahangari, 2016; Kondowe, 2014), the interpersonal metafunction (Yang, 2017; Chen Y. , 2016; Koussouhon & Dossoumou, 2015), or the textual metafunction (Kang, 2016; Paziraie, 2013).

The high number of studies on texts or discourses using SFG shows that SFG is a powerful tool for a text analysis. The claim that SFG is the *grammar of meaning* (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Eggins, 2004; Ezeifeke & Ogbazi, 2014) is met. The studies do not contribute to a further development of SFG, but the studies have certainly performed one of the important tasks of discourse analysis, namely to help general readers gain a better understanding and a better appreciation of a text.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the analysis of the text, it was found out that the text manipulates the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions well to express its meaning. The text chooses the transitivity processes, sentence subject, and moods well. The text also uses a lot of marked themes to emphasize important concepts.

Transitivity Analysis

"Grandmother" consists of 30 sentences and a total number of clauses. The transitivity analysis of the clauses shows that the the material process and the relational processes are the dominant processes in the story. The distribution of the the five types of process can be displayed in table 1.

Table 1: Transitivity Process Distribution

| No | Transitivity Procees | Frequency | Percentage |
|----|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. | Material | 44 | 46.32 |
| 2. | Relational | 37 | 38.95 |
| 3. | Mental | 6 | 6.32 |
| 4. | Behavioral | 5 | 5.26 |
| 5. | Verbal | 3 | 3.16 |
| | Total | 95 | 100.00 |

The material and relation processes occur 46.32% and 38.95% respectively, and the other three processes occur less than 15% in total. This section, therefore, is divided into three sections, namely the material process, the relational process, and the other processes.

The Material Process

The material processes which occur in the story are mostly related to Grandmother, the objects which belong to her, and the objects around her. The distribution of the material processes in relation to the agent and goal is displayed in table 2.

Table 2: Material Processes

| No | Transitivity Procees | Frequency | Percentage |
|----|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. | Grandmother | 10 | 22.7 |
| 2. | Object around Grandmother | 8 | 18.2 |
| 3. | Grandmother's Possession | 7 | 15.9 |
| 4. | Graveyard object | 6 | 13.6 |
| 5. | Life and death | 6 | 13.6 |
| 6. | Nature | 3 | 6.8 |
| 7. | Church object | 2 | 4.5 |
| 8. | People's Action | 3 | 4.5 |
| | Total | 45 | 100.00 |

The material processes mostly are used to show how his grandmother lived and finally died. They show what she usually does or did and what people did to her when she was still alive like in sentences (1) - (5).

- (1) (“I wonder why) *grandmother looks at the withered* flower in the old book that way? (6b)
- (2) *She had been sitting* in her arm-chair, telling us a long, beautiful tale; (11a)
- (3) and (*she*) *leaned her head back* to sleep awhile. (11e)
- (4) *She was laid* in a black coffin, looking mild and beautiful in the white folds of the shrouded linen, (15a)
- (5) *she kissed the fresh, red rose*, (28b)

The numbers in parentheses behind the texts show the clause number.

The material processes are also used to show what the parts of her body and clothes show her personality like in sentences (6) - (9).

- (6) and around her mouth lingered a sweet smile. (15e)
- (7) but every wrinkle had vanished, (15c)
- (8) and it [her dress] rustles when she moves. (2b)
- (9) they [her eyes] have been left to grandmother. (6k)

Her smile, her wrinkled skin, the dress she was wearing, and her eyes perform actions which make the narrator remember her. The actions make the memory of his grandmother stronger.

The material processes are also used to show actions which occur in relation to some objects which are connected to the grandmother like in (10) - (12).

- (10) the walls vanish as in a mist, (6h)
- (11) and when it [her story] was finished (11b) she said she was tired,
- (12) The hymn-book ... was placed under her head, for so she had wished it; (17a)

The sentences are about the walls which surround her. Using the present tense, the dramatic event in (10) marks the rebirth of the grandmother. She was not confined to her coffin anymore, but she is present in the narrator's life. Sentences (11) and (12) return to Grandma's first life. Using the past tense, the sentences bring the readers to the time when she was telling a story to her grandchildren and to the funeral where her hymn book was placed under her head in the coffin.

The material processes are also used to show the actions which marked the end of the grandmother's journey.

- (13) On the grave, close by the churchyard wall, they planted a rose-tree; (18a)
- (14) But over the grave fresh roses bloom, (26a)
- (15) And the nightingale sat among the flowers, (18c)

To respect and to show their love to the grandmother, people planted a rose tree in her graveyard, and the tree gives beautiful roses. The nightingale likes to sit among the flowers.

The material processes are also used to show that the grandmother was a religious person like in (16) and (17).

- (16) From the organ in the church sounded the music and the words of the beautiful psalms, (19a)
- (17) And the organ sounds (26c).

The grandmother used to sing psalms from the book she had and which was buried under her head when she died. After she died, the church was happy with her. She may rejoice with the psalms and words which the church organ sounds.

As a woman, the grandmother has also been in love when she was young. She is involved in a romantic love with a young man. The material processes in (18) - (19) show that.

- (18) At her side sits a young man, tall and strong; (7a)
- (19) he gives her a rose and she smiles. (7bc)

The young man loves her, and she also shows her love to him.

The material processes are also used to show some natural events which happen in relation to the grandmother like in (20) - (22).

- (20) where in summer the sunlight streams through thick foliage; (6j)
- (21) The moon shone down upon the grave, (20a)
- (22) The earth has been heaped on the coffin, (24a)

The order of the events is reverse. The event in (20) happens after that in (21), and the event in (21) happens after (22). In the story, as is apparent from the data number, (20) appears first. This may show that event in (20) is more important than those in (21) and (22). Furthermore, the sunlight in summer may signify happiness. This leads to the idea of happiness after sadness or life after death.

In the idea of life after death is also present in the material processes (23) - (25).

- (23) the dead return no more. (23b)
- (24) (They know) what a terror would come upon us (22b)
- (25) if such a strange thing were to happen, as the appearance of a dead person among us. (22c)
- (26) Ours will once again behold dear grandmother, young and beautiful as when ... she kissed the fresh, red rose (28ab).

Dead people will not come back as when they die. Instead they will return with the look they have when they are "young and beautiful."

The material processes in "Grandmother" have been employed well. The use of the material processes has showed that death is not the end of life. Grandmother remains alive in the heart of the narrator.

The Relational Processes

With the number of occurrence of 37 or 38.54%, the relational processes are the second major processes in the story. The processes fall into the three types of relational processes namely intensive, circumstantial, and possessive. Table 3 shows the distribution.

Table 3: Relational Processes

| No | Relational Processes | Frequency | Percentage |
|----|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. | Intensive | 27 | 72.97 |
| 2. | Circumstantial | 6 | 16.22 |
| 3. | Possessive | 4 | 10.81 |
| | Total | 37 | 100.00 |

Most of the relation processes, 23 or 62.2%, are about the grandmother like in (27) - (32).

- (27) Grandmother is very old, (1a)
- (28) her hair looked white and silvery, (15d)
- (29) but the eyes, those mild, saintly eyes, are the same,— (6l)
- (30) Grandmother is dead now. (10)
- (31) with the loving, gentle eyes that always looked young. (26d)
- (32) (she said) she was tired, (11d)

The sentences describe the grandmother's physical condition or appearance. She is described as an old woman with white and silvery hair and beautiful eyes. She is also described as tired after she told a story to her children.

A small number of clauses, 3 or 8%, describe the grandmother's characteristics.

- (33) and they [her eyes] have a mild, gentle expression in them (1e)
- (34) and on her countenance beamed happiness and peace. (12c)
- (35) who had been such a dear, good grandmother. (16c)

She is a very good, happy, and peaceful grandmother who has very soft and gentle eyes. No other characteristics are presented about her.

Other relation processes describe the objects connected with the grandmother, the flowers in her book and the graveyard, dead people, and the narrator like in (36) - (40).

- (36) and in the book, between the leaves, lies a rose, quite flat and dry; (5c)
- (37) The leaves of the hymn-book are dust; (25a)
- (38) and the rose, with all its recollections, has crumbled to dust also. (25b)
- (39) and in the book, between the leaves, lies a rose, quite flat and dry; (5c)
- (40) We did not feel at all afraid to look at the corpse of her (16a)

All the other relation processes are about death or objects related to death like *flat, dry, dust*, and *corpse*.

The Other Processes

The other transitivity processes which occur in the story are mental processes (6 or 6.25%), behavioral processes (5 or 5.20%), and verbal processes (3 or 3.13%). Sentences (41) - (43) below show mental processes.

- (41) The dead know more than we do (who are living) (21a)
- (42) Grandmother knows a great deal, (4a)
- (43) We could hear her gentle breathing as she slept; (12a)

In (41), the people know that death is a common thing, and they know that the dead know that the people who are still alive. In (42), the narrator knows that Grandmother knows much more stories than his father and mother because she is older than them. The mental process in (43), the mental process uses the verb *hear* to show their knowledge of what Grandmother is doing.

All the five behavioral processes in the story uses the verb *smile*, and the behavior are all the grandmother.

(44) and yet she smiles at it most pleasantly, (5f)

(45) She smiled once more, (14a)

The grandmother has a pleasant smile, and the narrator can remember that well.

The verbal processes only occur 3 times. The clauses are as follows.

(46) And then she can tell the most wonderful stories. (3)

(47) she said she was tired, (11c)

(48) and then people said she was dead. (14b)

The verbal processes involve the grandmother as the sawyer in (46) and (47) and the people in (48).

The Interpersonal Metafunction

"Grandmother" employs the interpersonal metafunction well to support the ideology of the story. It exploits the sentence mood as the element which covers both the sentence subject and finite (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004).

Sentence Subject

"Grandmother" is a story about the appreciation to a grandmother. The presence of *grandmother* and her appearance (her body and the objects which belong to her), therefore, is dominant in the story.

Table 4: Choice of Subject

| No | Subject | Frequency | Percentage |
|----|--------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. | Grandmother | 25 | 26.32 |
| 4. | Other Objects | 22 | 23.16 |
| 2. | Grandmother's Body | 18 | 18.95 |
| 3. | Grandmother's Possession | 10 | 10.53 |
| 5. | People | 7 | 7.37 |
| 6. | Dead People | 7 | 7.37 |
| 7. | Narrator | 3 | 3.16 |
| 8. | Young man | 3 | 3.16 |
| | Total | 95 | 100.00 |

Grandmother or *she* is used mostly as the subject of sentence subjects (25 or 26.32%), other objects like *the walls* or *the rose* or the pronouns which replace them are the second most frequent subjects. The nouns or pronouns which are related to Grandmother are the third most frequent subjects (18 or 18.95%), and the objects which belongs to her are the fourth most frequent subject (10 or 10.53%). In total, the number of clauses which uses Grandmother or *she*, the nouns which are related to her body, and the nouns which are related to her possessions is 53 or 55.79%.

The high number of the use *grandmother*, her body, or her possessions show the significance of the process she goes through. She is presented as any other human being.

- (49) for she was alive before father and mother— (4a)
- (50) she said she was tired, (11c)
- (51) Grandmother is dead now. (10)
- (52) and then people said she was dead. (14c)

She is alive, she is tired, and she is dead. However, as she is a good person, what people remember after she passed away are only her good points.

- (53) And then she can tell the most wonderful stories. (3)
- (54) She has a hymn-book with large silver clasps, (5a)
- (55) in which she often reads; (5b)
- (56) and yet she smiles at it most pleasantly, (5f)
- (57) Grandmother cannot smile like that now. (8)
- (58) who had been such a dear, good grandmother. (16c)

Grandmother tells wonderful stories, read psalms, and smiles pleasantly. Her good physical features also remain in the narrator's memory.

- (59) and her hair is quite white; (1c)
- (60) her hair looked white and silvery, (15d)
- (61) but her eyes are like two stars, (1d)
- (62) but the eyes, those mild, saintly eyes, are the same,— (6l)
- (63) with the loving, gentle eyes that always looked young. (26d).

Her hair is white and silvery, and she has mild gentle, saintly loving eyes like two stars. Other features which she may have and which might be bad.

Many other clauses (10 or 10.53%) also use Grandmother's objects or possessions as the subject. They like in clauses (64) - (67)

- (64) and it [her dress] rustles when she moves. (2b)
- (65) and tears even come into her eyes. (5g)
- (66) and around her mouth lingered a sweet smile. (15e)
- (67) The hymn-book ... was placed under her head, for so she had wished it; (17a).

The subjects are Grandmother's dress in (64), her tears in (65), her smile (66), and her hymn-book in (67).

The dominant use of *grandmother*, her physical features, and her possessions (almost 80%) confirms that the story is about the grandmother and is meant to show the narrator's appreciation to her. Almost all the clauses are about her, her appearance, or her possessions.

Clause Mood

The moods of the clauses in *Grandmother* are well selected. The elements of a sentence which comprise the subject and the finite operator (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) in the story reflect the story ideology well. The story consists of four paragraphs, 58 clauses have their moods in the present tense, and 38 clauses in the past tense. The mix of the present tense and past tense in sentences which come close together brings the idea of the close relationship of the present and the past. The choice of moods in each paragraph reflects the paragraph idea well.

The first paragraph uses the present tense. It tells about the grandmother's life in a dramatic way.

Grandmother is very old, her face is wrinkled, and her hair is quite white; but her eyes are like two stars, and they have a mild, gentle expression in them when they look at you, which does you good. She wears a dress of heavy, rich silk, with large flowers worked on it; and it rustles when she moves. (p. 365)

The grandmother is described vividly as if she were still alive. Furthermore, what she usually does are still present in the scene. Her capabilities are still present there.

... *she can* tell the most wonderful stories. *Grandmother knows* a great deal, for she was alive before father and mother—that's quite certain. *She has* a hymn-book with large silver clasps, in which *she often reads*; and in the book, between the leaves, *lies a rose*, quite flat and dry; *it is* not so pretty as the roses *which are* standing in the glass, and yet *she smiles* at it most pleasantly, and *tears even come* into her eyes. (p. 365)

The vivid description of the grandmother in the present tense can be interpreted that life does not end after death. The grandmother is not completely gone after she dies. Her life is only transformed into a different form.

The second paragraph starts with a mood in the present tense *Grandmother is dead now*, but then it moves to the past tense.

We could hear her gentle breathing as she slept; gradually *it became* quieter and calmer ... *She smiled* once more, and then people said she was dead. *She was* laid in a black coffin ... and then *they buried* grandmother. (p. 366)

The paragraph tells about the grandmother's dead and burial. Death was inevitable, and she rested in the final destiny.

The moods of third paragraph are all in the past tense. It tells about the graveyard and the life of the grandmother. It can be said that nature accepted the grandmother happily when she was buried in the grave.

On the grave, close by the churchyard wall, *they planted* a rose-tree; *it was* soon full of roses, and *the nightingale* sat among the flowers, and *sang* over the grave. (p. 366)

Nature produces roses for her in the grave, and the nightingale sings among the flowers over the grave.

The pleasant welcome of the nature can be attributed to the grandmother's life. During her life, she probably lives up the teachings of her religion. The organ in the church as the representation of the Christian belief sound its acceptance.

From the organ in the church *sounded the music and the words of the beautiful psalms, which were* written in the old book under the head of the dead one. (p. 367)

She reads the psalms in her book, and the church responds to her singing after she dies.

The last paragraph of the story start with some clause moods in the past tense, then it moves on with the present tense.

The moon shone down upon the grave, but *the dead was* not there; *every child could* go safely, even at night, and pluck a rose from the tree by the churchyard wall. ... *The dead know* more than *we do who are* living. ... *They are* better off than we are; *the dead return* no more. ... But over the grave *fresh roses bloom, the nightingale sings,* and *the organ sounds* and there still *lives a remembrance of old grandmother* ... Eyes can never die. Ours will once again behold dear grandmother. (p. 367)

The paragraph starts with 3 clauses in the past tense, moves on to clause moods in the present tense, but inside it has four clause moods in the past tense.

They know what *a terror would* come upon us if such *a strange thing were* to happen. there still lives a remembrance of old grandmother, with the loving, gentle eyes *that always looked* young. ... Ours will once again behold dear grandmother, young and beautiful as when, for the first time, *she kissed the fresh, red rose...* . (p. 367)

The past tense is used for a conditional sentence and adjectival clauses.

The change from the clause moods in the past tense to the clause moods in the present tense in the paragraph may signify the transformation of the grandmother's life. Her life has been transformed from death to life again. *Ours will once again behold dear grandmother* (367).

The Textual Metafunctions

Grandmother also uses the textual metafunction to support its ideology. The story uses 13 marked themes to show the life of the grandmother before and after her death, her death, and her return to life again after her death. The marked theme in (68) signals the start of the grandmother's recollection of her past.

(68) and in the book, between the leaves, lies a rose, quite flat and dry; (5c).

The clauses in (69) - (73) mark other phases of her life.

(69) and on her countenance beamed happiness and peace. (12c)

(70) and around her mouth lingered a sweet smile. (15e)

(71) at her side sits a young man, tall and strong; (7a)

(72) and all around her is the glorious green wood, (6i)

Using a prepositional group as a marked theme, clauses (68) - (71) direct the readers at the grandmother. Clauses (69) and (70) show her happy and peace life before her death, and clauses (71) - (72) show her in the company of the man she loves and in her glorious environment.

The use of a nominal group as a marked theme in (73) also directs the readers to her life after death.

(73) and grandmother, why she is young again, a charming maiden, fresh as a rose, with round, rosy cheeks, fair, bright ringlets, and a figure pretty and graceful; (6k)

After she comes to her life again, she looks young, beautiful, and graceful.

The grandmother's death is captured well in the story with an adverbial group as a marked theme in clause (74)

(74) *gradually* it [her breath] became quieter and calmer, and on her countenance beamed happiness and peace (12bc)

She died calmly and peacefully.

The grandmother's death is a phase which she has gone through. The phase is marked with a prepositional group and a cleft construction as a marked theme.

(75) On the grave, close by the churchyard wall, they planted a rose-tree; (18a)

(76) and it is earth only that lies within it. (24b).

The grave where her body was buried was marked with a rose tree, and eventually the body becomes earth.

The transformation of her body to earth, however, also marks her transformation of her death to life again. The text presents the transformation well.

... and it is earth only that lies within it. The leaves of the hymn-book are dust; and the rose, with all its recollections, has crumbled to dust also. But *over the grave fresh roses bloom*, the nightingale sings, and the organ sounds and *there still lives a remembrance of old grandmother* ... , with the loving, gentle eyes that always looked young. Eyes can never die. Ours will once again behold dear grandmother, young and beautiful (p. 367)

After her body, her hymn-book leaves, and the rose have crumbled to dust, *over the grave fresh roses bloom, the nightingale sings, and the organ sounds and there still lives a remembrance of old grandmother*. The two clauses start with a marked theme *over the grave* and *there*. The grandmother will keep on living in the child's and his family's memory.

The narrator's description of her grandmother shows her love and respect to her grandmother. The respect of the narrator to her grandmother also shows that the respect to an elder person is very common in every culture including the cultures in Indonesia. The life value is well observed in Javanese culture (Astuti, 2017) and Dayak (Yuni, 2018) culture in Indonesia.

To sum up, although the use of the textual metafunction to create the meaning of the text is low, 13.64%, the use of marked themes in the text emphasizes the phases of the grandmother's life well. It marks the grandmother's recollection of her love, her life before death, her life after death, her death, and her return to life.

CONCLUSION

Despite its short size (only 4 paragraphs and 30 sentences), Andersen's "Grandmother" as a children story presents people's life cycle (life-death-life) well. The granddaughter's recall of her grandmother's life, her death, and her description of the grandmother after the death reveal the cycle. *The life before death is very important as it sets the life after death*. The life before death determines the quality for the life after death. This conclusion is in line with the idea that "[d]eath is central to the meaning and value of human life as experienced by individuals and by communities. Death does not give meaning to life, but does provide the backdrop against which life is lived" (Byock, 2002).

Concerning the use of Systemic Functional Grammar, the three metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal, and textual) prove to be powerful tools to analysis a text. The use of the metafunctions reveals the structure and ideology of the text. Furthermore, the application can reveal the quality of a text and can be used to appreciate a text.

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