

Functional Grammar Analysis: Three Meta-functions in 'Jack and the Beanstalk'

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ABSTRACT

To further learn about how important literature in early stages of human life is, an approach towards children's literature is needed. This study aims to analyze a work of children's literature with systemic functional linguistics approach. ideational, textual, and interpersonal meanings are analyzed from the short story entitled "Jack and the Beanstalk" accessed from British council for kids. The researchers used descriptive qualitative method. The story was broken down into individual clauses which were then analyzed using SFL in tables. The result showed that the majority of the text used material process and topical unmarked theme, which indicates that the story is simple but concise. The story itself, although simple, because it tells a magical fantasy tale, which stimulates children's imagination to the fullest.

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I. INTRODUCTION

To this very second, language remains an important matter to human life. Language is used every day and on almost every occasion. From the start of the day until the end of it, almost all of our activities in one way or another use language or are related to it in some way. Even activities that don't involve social interactions still use language to some extent, like thinking or analyzing for example. The usage of language is inevitable and humans can't seem to survive without it. A higher understanding about language also seems to benefit us. Take writers, lawyers, and mass media for example. Through a clever usage of language, they can make a huge impact.

To further understand language, an approach using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) can be done ([Christian M I M Matthiessen; M A K Halliday, 1997](#)). As the name suggests, SFL is an approach towards language functions and the system within the text ([Eggins, 2005](#)). The main discussion within SFL revolves around meanings which can be divided into three parts: ideational, textual, and interpersonal ([Martin, J. R., Matthiessen, C. M. I. M., & Painter, 2010](#)). Only after analyzing all three 'systems' can we dive deeper into the meaning and the function of the text.

Humans' understanding of language begins from as early as the first year of their birth which then keeps advancing until they become adults. As such, the early stages of understanding language are

important because they are the foundations that support the understanding of adults. To further understand how children understand language, an approach towards children literature is needed (Lukens, 1999). Therefore, this paper is dedicated to analyzing a product of child literature in hope of learning more about how children, as those who are undergoing early stages of life understand the written world. This study analyzes the short story “Jack and the Beanstalk” using the Systemic Functional Linguistics approach. The story is short, simple, but meaningful at the same time, making it a very good work of art for children literature.

II. METHODS

Descriptive qualitative research has data in the form of words or pictures, not numbers (Bogdan, R., & Biklen, 2006). Descriptive qualitative research analyzes data as closely as possible to the form in which they were transcribed. The results of the analysis describe what the world-view looks like in a narrative form. The data for this study were taken from a text entitled 'Jack and the Beanstalk' obtained from British council.org for kids on December, 21st 2021. The main focus of the research will be the three meta-functions in SFL, namely ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. The “Jack and the Beanstalk” short story will be broken down into several parts in accordance with the clause. Each clause’s ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings will then be analyzed, the result of which will be presented in the form of tables followed by the understandings based on the data from the tables.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Paragraph 1

Once upon a time, there was a boy called Jack.

Simplex

Once upon a time	there	was	a boy called Jack
Adjunct	S	F	P
Circ: Location (Time)		Existential	Existent
Theme: Topical (Marked)	Rheme		
Residue	Mood	Residue	

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

He lived with his mother.

Simplex

He	lived	with his mother
S	F	P
Carrier	Relational (Attributive)	Attribute
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme	
Mood	Residue	

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

They were very poor.

Simplex

They	were	very poor
S	F	P
Carrier	Relational (Attributive)	Attribute
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme	
Mood	Residue	

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

All they had was a cow.

Simplex

All they had	was	a cow
C	F	P
Attribute	Relational (Attributive)	Carrier
Theme: Topical (Marked)	Rheme	
Residue	Mood	Residue

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

Paragraph 2

One morning, Jack’s mother told Jack to take their cow to market and sell her.

Simplex

One morning,	Jack’s mother	told	Jack	to take their cow to market and sell her
Adjunct	S	F	P	C
Circ: Location (Time)	Sayer	Verbal	Target	Verbiage
Theme: Topical (Marked)	Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme		
Residue	Mood	Residue		

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

On the way,	Jack	met		a man
Adjunct	S	F	P	C
Circ: Location (Place)	Actor	Material (Doing)		Goal
Theme: Topical (Marked)	Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme		
Residue	Mood		Residue	

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

He gave Jack some magic beans for the cow.

Simplex

He	gave		Jack	some magic beans for the cow
S	F	P	C	C
Actor	Material (Doing)		Recipient	Goal
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme			
Mood	Residue			

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

Paragraph 3

Jack took the beans and went back home.

Jack	took		the beans	and	went back		home
S	F	P	C	Conj.	F	P	Adjunct
Actor	Material (Doing)		Goal		Material (Happening)		Circ: Location (Place)
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme						
Mood	Residue						

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

When Jack's mother saw the beans, she was very angry.

Complex

When Jack's mother saw the beans	she	was		very angry
Adjunct	S	F	P	C
Circ: Location (Time)	Carrier		Relational (Attributive)	Attribute
Theme: Topical (Marked)	Rheme			
Residue	Mood		Residue	

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

Jack's mother	saw		the beans
S	F	P	C
Senser	Mental (Perception)		Phenomenon
Rheme			
Mood		Residue	

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

She threw the beans out of the window.

Simplex

She	threw		the beans	out of window
S	F	P	C	Adjunct
Actor	Material (Doing)		Goal	Circ: Location (Place)
Theme: Topical (unmarked)	Rheme			
Mood	Residue			

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

Paragraph 4

The next morning, Jack looked out of the window.

Simplex

The next morning,	Jack	looked		out the window
Adjunct	S	F	P	C
Circ: Location (Time)	Senser		Mental (Perception)	Phenomenon
Theme: Topical (Marked)	Rheme			
Residue	Mood		Residue	

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

There was a giant beanstalk.

Simplex

There	was		a giant beanstalk
	F	P	S
	Existential		Existent
Theme: Topical (Marked)	Rheme		
Residue	Mood	Residue	Mood

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

He went outside and started to climb the beanstalk.

Complex

He	went	outside	and	started to climb	the beanstalk		
S	F	P	Adjunct	Conj.	F	P	C
Actor	Material (Happening)	Circ: Location		Material (Doing)	Scope		
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme		Textual Theme	Theme: Topical (Marked)	Rheme		
Mood	Residue						

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

Paragraph 5

He climbed up to the sky through the clouds.

Simplex

He	climbed up	to the sky	through the clouds
S	F	P	C
Actor	Material (Happening)	Scope	Circ: Manner
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme		
Mood	Residue		

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

Jack saw a beautiful castle.

Simplex

Jack	saw	a beautiful castle
S	F	P
Senser	Mental (Perception)	Phenomenon
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme	
Mood	Residue	

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

He went inside.

Simplex

He	went	inside
S	F	P
Actor	Material (Happening)	Circ: Location (Place)
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme	
Mood	Residue	

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

Paragraph 6

Jack heard a voice. 'Fee, fi, fo, fum!'

Simplex

Jack	heard	a voice
S	F	P
Senser	Mental (Perception)	Phenomenon
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme	
Mood	Residue	

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

Jack ran into a cupboard.

Simplex

Jack	ran	into a cupboard
S	F	P
Actor	Material (Happening)	Circ: Location (Place)
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme	
Mood	Residue	

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

Paragraph 7

An enormous giant came into the room and sat down.

Complex

An enormous giant	came	into the room	and	sat	down
S	F	P	Adjunct	Conj.	C
Actor	Material (Doing)	Circ: Location (Place)		Goal	Circ: Manner
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme		Textual Theme	Theme: Topical (Marked)	Rheme
Mood	Residue				

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

On the table there was a hen and a golden harp.

Simplex

On the table	there	was	a hen and a golden harp
Adjunct		F	P
Circ: Location (Place)		Existential	Existent
Theme: Topical (Marked)	Rheme		
Residue	Mood	Residue	Mood

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

Paragraph 8

‘Lay!’ said the giant.

Simplex

‘Lay!’	said		the giant
C	F	P	S
Verbiage	Verbal		Sayer
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme		
Residue	Mood	Residue	Mood

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

The hen laid an egg.

Simplex

The hen	laid		An egg
S	F	P	C
Actor	Material (Doing)		Goal
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme		
Mood	Residue		

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

It was made of gold.

Simplex

It	was	made of gold	
S	F	P	C
Carrier	Relational (Attributive)		Attribute
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme		
Mood	Residue		

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

‘Sing!’ said the giant.

Simplex

‘Sing!’	said		the giant
C	F	P	S
Verbiage	Verbal		Sayer
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme		
Residue	Mood	Residue	Mood

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

The harp began to sing.

Simplex

The harp	began		to sing
S	F	P	C
Actor	Material (Doing)		Goal
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme		
Mood	Residue		

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

Soon the giant was asleep.

Simplex

Soon	the giant	was	asleep	
Adjunct	S	F	P	C
Circ: Location (Time)	Actor	Relational (Attributive)		Attribute
Theme: Topical (Marked)	Rheme			
Residue	Mood	Residue		

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

Paragraph 9

Jack jumped out of the cupboard.

Simplex

Jack	jumped out		of the cupboard
S	F	P	Adjunct
Actor	Material (Doing)		Circ: Location (Place)
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme		
Mood	Residue		

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

He took the hen and the harp.

Simplex

He	took		the hen and the harp
S	F	P	C
Actor	Material (Doing)		Goal
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme		
Mood	Residue		

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

Suddenly, the harp sang, ‘Help, master!’

Simplex

Suddenly,	the harp	sang,	‘Help, master!’	
Adjunct	S	F	P	C
Circ: Manner	Sayer	Verbal		Verbiage
Theme: Topical (Marked)	Rheme			
Residue	Mood		Residue	

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

Paragraph 10

Jack ran and started climbing down the beanstalk.

Simplex

Jack	ran	and	started climbing down		The beanstalk	
S	F	P	Conj.	F	P	C
Actor	Material (Happening)		Material (Happening)		Scope	
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme		Textual Theme	Theme: Topical (Marked)	Rheme	
Mood		Residue				

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

The giant came down after him.

Simplex

The giant	came down		after him
S	F	P	Adjunct
Actor	Material (Happening)		Circ: Manner
Theme: Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme		
Mood		Residue	

Mood: Declarative > Giving Information

From the data above, it can be seen that the short story consists mostly of material processes with topical unmarked themes. The story is designed and written in a simple way to help children understand the story and the message that was meant to be delivered by the writer.

The writer heavily uses material processes to stimulate children’s fresh minds and wild imagination. The events are described in a simple, understandable manner. Mental and verbal processes are the most used after material, indicating that they are used to spice the action

up within the story. Although not as much as verbal and mental processes, existential processes could also be found quite often to help build the atmosphere where the story takes place. Lastly, relational processes are not very common for if the story describes a character’s trait a little bit too much, it might distract the children from getting the main idea of the story.

The themes are not constant. Almost every new clause features a new theme, different from before. It might be hard for the children to understand this kind of theme because the children are expected to understand a new thing before the last thing is completely described. We can also see that most of the themes used are topical unmarked, indicating that the sentences are made simple and straightforward. Throughout the entire story, the only mood that can be found is declarative. Which is logical because this is a short story meant to tell a tale. Thus, no other interpersonal interactions are needed.

IV. CONCLUSION

SFL focuses on three meta-functions, namely the ideational, textual, and interpersonal meanings. Ideational meanings are the idea, logical concept, or the experience within the text. Textual meanings are the way a text is written to deliver a concise and organized message. Interpersonal meanings are the meanings found within a text which is related to the participants of the communication using the said text. In the short story “Jack and the Beanstalk”, material processes and topical unmarked themes are the most common feature that can be found. Indicating that the writer intended to write a simple but meaningful story. The text itself describes a magical story of a child who was told to sell a cow to the market but got scammed in the way instead. Although the story seems to be out of this world, the writer did a great job at composing it. Children’s literature is made to be simple and concise. But what is being delivered is something that can stimulate children’s wild imagination and innocent nature. In the end, the researchers hope that children’s literature will continue to grow and develop. Children are the future of mankind. Educating them and supporting them are our responsibilities as adults. The researchers also hope that this SFL analysis could be useful for anyone who happens to read it.

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