Elstic-IJ Volume 5 Number 3 (2025)
P-ISSN 2807-7954; E-ISSN 2807-7350

Research Article

AN ANALYSIS OF MENTAL AND VERBAL PROCESSES IN HENRY MOODIE'S SONG "DRUNK TEXT" USING SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS

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Abstract

This research analyzes the song lyrics "Drunk Text" by Henry Moodie using the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by Halliday. The focus of this research is on the ideational metafunction, especially the mental and verbal processes found in the song. The mental process relates to thoughts, feelings, and desires, while the verbal process involves communication through words or speech. This research aims to find out how the songwriter expresses emotions such as regret, longing, and confusion through language. By identifying the mental and verbal processes in the lyrics, the researcher can better understand how the song represents human experience and communication. The result of this research shows that "Drunk Text" reflects emotional struggles and failed communication through the use of mental and verbal expressions in its lyrics.

Keywords: *Ideational metafunction; Mental process; Song lyrics; Systemic Functional Linguistics; Verbal process*

Article History:
Submitted : 12 November 2025
Revised : 15 December 2025
Accepted : 17 December 2025
Published : 31 December 2025

How to cite this article:
Desi Lestari, Fina Fatkhurizqia, Nadisa Apriani, & Adinda Destiani Habibah. (2025). An ANALYSIS OF MENTAL AND VERBAL PROCESSES IN HENRY MOODIE'S SONG "DRUNK TEXT" USING SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS. *English Language, Linguistics, and Culture International Journal*, *5*(03). https://doi.org/10.24252/elstic-ij.v5i03.62614

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INTRODUCTION

Language is an important medium used by humans to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in everyday life. In the view of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) developed by Halliday & Matthiessen (2013), language has a function that is more than just a tool for communication. Language is considered a system of meaning that has three main functions, namely metafunctions. These three functions include ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunction.

From the three functions, the ideational metafunction plays an important role in describing human experiences, both internal and external. As explained by Sinaga et al. (2023), the ideational metafunction is more focused on how language is used to describe experiences, both external such as actions and events, and internal such as feelings and thoughts. The ideational metafunction is divided into several types of processes, namely material, mental, verbal, behavioral, relational, and existential processes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Each type of process represents a different form of experience, such as physical actions, feelings, thoughts, or forms of communication.

Ideational meaning is realized through a system called the transitivity system. According to Adjei et al. (2015), in the transitivity system, each clause is analyzed based on process, participant, and circumstance. Thus, transitivity helps reveal how language represents reality through clause structure and lexical choices. The types of processes in the transitivity system include material, mental, verbal, behavioral, relational, and existential processes.

In the context of this research, the focus of analysis is directed at two types of processes, namely mental processes and verbal processes. Halliday & Matthiessen (2013) explained that mental processes are related to thinking, feeling, and wanting, while verbal processes are related to communicative actions such as speaking, informing, or responding. These two processes were chosen because they are considered to best describe the emotional meaning and communication situation that arise in the song "Drunk Text" by Henry Moodie which is the object of this research.

The song "Drunk Text" was chosen as the object of research because its lyrics describe feelings of doubt, regret, and the desire to speak that cannot be conveyed. Aini & Mahardhika (2025) explained that the song Drunk Text by Henry Moodie describes the emotional conflict of an individual who regrets after sending a message to someone they miss while drunk. Through mental and verbal process analysis, this research tries to reveal how emotions, thoughts, and communication failures are represented in the song's lyrics.

Based on this background, this research aims to analyze the ideational metafunction in the lyrics of Henry Moodie's song "Drunk Text" using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics theoretical framework. In particular, this research focuses on how mental processes and verbal processes are used in the lyrics of Henry Moodie's song "Drunk Text". Thus, the results of this research are hoped to provide a deeper understanding of the application of SFL theory, especially ideational metafunction, in analyzing literary texts such as song lyrics.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach because it is considered most appropriate for analyzing song lyrics, allowing researchers to explore in depth the meaning and function of the language used in Henry Moodie's song "Drunk Text." The theoretical basis of this research is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), with a focus on the ideational metafunction, particularly verbal process and mental process. The research data was gathered from the lyrics of the song "Drunk Text" (Moodie, 2023) as the primary data source, as well as from articles and books discussing SFL theory and language metafunction as secondary data sources. This song was chosen because it contains emotional and interpersonal communication themes that are relevant to verbal and mental processes within Halliday's theoretical framework.

Data collection and analysis were started by downloading the official lyrics of the song "Drunk Text," then splitting them into clauses. Each clause was identified to find and separate clauses containing verbal processes and mental processes. Next, the data was analyzed based on SFL theory to reveal the meaning constructed through the linguistic choices used. To maintain data validity, this research applied theoretical consistency with Halliday and Matthiessen's theory and conducted peer checking through discussions with colleagues who understand functional linguistic analysis to minimize bias and ensure the accuracy of the research results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result of this research shows that Henry Moodie's song "Drunk Text" uses many words that express feelings and thoughts (Wijayanti, 2024). The most common types of processes found in the lyrics are mental process and verbal process. These two processes help to show the singer's emotions, such as love, sadness, and hesitation. In simple terms, the song is not about physical actions but more about what the person feels and wants to say but cannot. The next part will explain more about how these processes appear in the lyrics and what they mean.

Verbal Process

The first type of process identified in the lyrics is the verbal process. Verbal process is related to the activity of speaking, saying, or expressing messages through words. In Henry Moodie's song "Drunk Text," this process shows how the singer tries to express his feelings

through words, even though he sometimes holds back because of fear and doubt (Dian, 2024). The following clauses illustrate how verbal processes appear in the lyrics.

Table 1. *I nearly said it* (Clause 1)

I	**said**	**it**	**nearly**
Sayer	Process (Verbal)	Verbiage	Circumstance

Based on the table above, the clause "I nearly said it" contains a verbal process. The sayer is "I" which is the speaker or main character in the song. The process "said" indicates a verbal activity that was almost done, while the verbiage "it" refers to something that was about to be said. The circumstance "nearly" represents something that almost happened.

Table 2. *Started to write what I wanna say* (Clause 2)

I	**write**	**what I wanna say**	**started**
Sayer	Process (Verbal)	Verbiage	Circumstance

In the clause "Started to write what I wanna say", the sayer is "I", the process is "write", the verbiage is "what I wanna say" indicates the content of the message to be conveyed to someone, and the circumstance is "started" marks the initial intention to communicate.

Table 3. *Do we make stupid jokes?* (Clause 3)

we	**make**	**stupid jokes**	**–**
Sayer	Process (Verbal)	Verbiage	Circumstance

The clause "Do we make stupid jokes?" is a verbal process, the sayer is "we" as the speaker, indicating both parties (the speaker and the person being liked). The process is "make" here describes the verbal action of joking, and the verbiage is "stupid jokes" indicates a light form of communication that masks true feelings.

Table 4. *Cause I was afraid you'd say no* (Clause 4)

I & you	**say**	**no**	**cause I was afraid**
Sayer	Process (Verbal)	Verbiage	Circumstance

The clause "cause I was afraid you'd say no" contains a verbal process with a focus on the act of speaking that the speaker fears. The sayers are "I" and "you" because the person the speaker likes might reject them if they reveal their feelings, the process "say" indicates the potential for negative communication (rejection), and the verbiage "no" is the anticipated

content of the utterance. The circumstance "cause I was afraid" explains why the speaker chose to hide from reality.

Table 5. *If I tell you the truth* (Clause 5)

I & you	**tell**	**the truth**	**–**
Sayer	Process (Verbal)	Verbiage	Circumstance

The clause "If I tell you the truth" is a verbal process, because it indicates the act of revealing something honest. The sayers are "I" and "you", the process is "tell", and the verbiage is "the truth" which contains the truth that is to be conveyed.

Mental Process

The next type of process found in the lyrics is the mental process. According to Kaur (2021), mental processes are related to the activities of thinking, feeling, remembering, desiring, or reflecting that occur in the mind. In the song "Drunk Text," mental processes dominate the song, reflecting emotional and mental struggles. The following clauses present and explain mental processes in the lyrics.

Table 6. *Do you remember? You probably don't* (Clause 6)

you	**don't (remember)**	**–**	**probably**
Senser	Process (Mental)	Phenomenon	Circumstance

The clause "Do you remember?" contains a mental process. The senser "you" is the person who is the object of the speaker's feelings. The process "don't (remember)" indicates a denial of the mental act of remembering. The circumstance "probably" indicates uncertainty, describing that the speaker feels doubtful whether that person really remembers the incident or not.

Table 7. *But I still remember it said* (Clause 7)

I	**remember**	**it said**	**still**
Senser	Process (Mental)	Phenomenon	Circumstance

The clause "But I still remember it said" indicates a mental process because it relates to memory and self-awareness. The senser is "I" the speaker who remembers the content of the deleted message. The process is "remember" indicates ongoing cognitive activity. The phenomenon is "it said" which is the content of a previous message. The circumstance is "still" emphasizes that the memory remains until now.

Table 8. *I wish I was who you drunk-texted at midnight* (Clause 8)

I	**wish**	**I was who you drunk-texted**	**at midnight**
Senser	Process (Mental)	Phenomenon	Circumstance

The clause "I wish I was who you drunk-texted at midnight" is a mental process that shows an emotional attitude in the form of hope. The phenomenon "I was who you drunk-texted" describes the content of that desire, which is to be the person who receives messages when drunk from someone they like. The circumstance "at midnight" indicates the time that reinforces the emotional atmosphere.

Table 9. *Wish I was the reason you stay up till three* (Clause 9)

I	**wish**	**I was the reason you stay up till three**	**–**
Senser	Process (Mental)	Phenomenon	Circumstance

In this clause, the process is mental with the verb "wish" as the core of the feeling of desire. The senser is "I", and the phenomenon is "I was the reason you stayed up until three" showing the speaker's desire to be the reason their loved one stayed up late into the night.

Table 10. *And you can't fall asleep waiting for me to reply* (Clause 10)

you	**can't fall asleep**	**waiting for me to reply**	**–**
Senser	Process (Mental)	Phenomenon	Circumstance

The clause "and you can't fall asleep waiting for me to reply" also includes a mental process, because it describes the psychological condition of someone who cannot sleep. The senser is "you" which is the object of the speaker's desire. The process "can't fall asleep" shows an emotional condition that is influenced by feelings. The phenomenon "waiting for me to reply" shows that the speaker hopes that the person they like will wait for a response from them until they cannot sleep.

Table 11. *It's hard to get by when you're still on my mind every day* (Clause 11)

–	**it's hard to get by**	**when you're still on my mind**	**every day**
Senser	Process (Mental)	Phenomenon	Circumstance

This clause is a mental process, because it describes the feeling of difficulty that the speaker experiences because of thinking about someone all the time. The process is a feeling of difficulty "it's hard to get by". The phenomenon "you're still on my mind" refers to thoughts that are kept filled with the person who is liked. The circumstance "every day" indicates the frequency, emphasizing that the feeling is ongoing without stopping.

Table 12. *Sometimes I question if you feel the same* (Clause 12)

I	**question**	**if you feel the same**	**sometimes**
Senser	Process (Mental)	Phenomenon	Circumstance

The clause "Sometimes I question if you feel the same" is a cognitive type of mental process, because it shows thinking and questioning. The senser is "I" which is the speaker who is reflecting on their feelings. The process "question" indicates doubt and inner curiosity. The phenomenon "if you feel the same" indicates the content of the doubtful thoughts, while the circumstance "sometimes" describes that these feelings of doubt come up over and over again.

Table 13. *I wonder if I cross your mind half as much as you do mine* (Clause 13)

I	**wonder**	**if I cross your mind half as much as you do mine**	**–**
Senser	Process (Mental)	Phenomenon	Circumstance

The clause "I wonder if I cross your mind half as much as you do mine" is a mental process because it describes the activity of thinking and doubting something. The senser is "I", the process "wonder" indicates inner curiosity, the phenomenon "if I cross your mind half as much as you do mine" describes the speaker's thoughts whether the person they like also thinks about them as much as they do.

Table 14. *I wish I sent you that drunk text at midnight* (Clause 14)

I	**wish**	**I sent you that drunk text**	**at midnight**
Senser	Process (Mental)	Phenomenon	Circumstance

The clause "I wish I sent you that drunk text at midnight" is an emotional type of mental process. The senser is "I" who feels deep regret. The process "wish" indicates an unfulfilled hope or desire. The phenomenon is "I sent you that drunk text" which describes an action that should have been taken but was not. The circumstance "at midnight" reinforces the emotional nuance and time in the context of the song.

Table 15. *I wonder how you would reply* (Clause 15)

I	**wonder**	**how you would reply**	**–**
Senser	Process (Mental)	Phenomenon	Circumstance

The last clause "I wonder how you would reply" contains a mental process that shows inner curiosity. The senser is "I", the process "wonder" shows reflective thinking, and the

phenomenon "how you would reply" describes the content of the speaker's inner question. This clause closes the song with a feeling of suspense between hope and doubt.

The data analyzed by the researchers were obtained from the lyrics of the song "Drunk Text" by Henry Moodie. Each clause in the lyrics was analyzed and converted into a table of components of the transitivity system based on the systemic functional linguistics theory by Halliday and Matthiessen.

In the transitivity system, the clause analysis includes participants, processes, and circumstances. The participants in this study consist of the sayer and senser, which are relevant to verbal and mental processes. The processes analyzed are classified into verbal and mental types, while the circumstances describe time, cause, or condition that accompany the process.

Distribution of Transitivity Components

Process

Table 16. Kinds of processes found in the song lyrics

Process Type	Sum	Percentage
Verbal Process	5	33.3%
Mental Process	10	66.7%
Total	**15**	**100%**

There are 15 clauses found in the lyrics of the song "Drunk Text." Among these, the researchers identified 10 clauses (66.7%) containing mental processes and 5 clauses (33.3%) containing verbal processes.

Participants

Table 17. Kinds of participants found in the song lyrics

Participants	Sum	Percentage
Sayer	5	17.86%
Verbiage	5	17.86%
Senser	9	32.14%
Phenomenon	9	32.14%
Total	**28**	**100%**

Based on the analysis, there are a total of 28 participants found in the song lyrics. The most frequent participants are senser with 9 occurrences (32.14%) and phenomenon with 9 occurrences (32.14%), while sayer and verbiage each appear 5 times (17.86%).

Circumstances

Table 18. Kinds of circumstances found in the song lyrics

Circumstances	Sum	Percentage
Extent	3	50%
Location	2	33.33%
Manner	1	16.67%
Total	**6**	**100%**

Based on the table above, there are a total of 6 circumstances. The most frequent type is extent with 3 occurrences (50%), followed by location with 2 occurrences (33.33%), and manner with 1 occurrence (16.67%).

CONCLUSION

Based on an analysis of the lyrics of Henry Moodie's song "Drunk Text" using Halliday and Matthiessen's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach, it is possible to conclude that mental and verbal processes dominate the song. Both types of processes contribute significantly to the construction of ideational meaning, which describes the speaker's emotional sentiments, thoughts, and desires in the song.

The verbal process in this song shows the narrator's attempt to express their feelings through words, even though they're often held back by fear and doubt. Meanwhile, the mental process reveals an inner struggle in the form of memories, regrets, and unspoken hopes. This shows that the song "Drunk Text" emphasizes inner experiences and emotional communication rather than physical actions, thereby reinforcing the ideational function in SFL as a representation of human experiences, both internal and interpersonal.

This research has several limitations. First, the focus of the analysis is limited to only two types of processes, namely mental and verbal, so that other aspects of ideational metafunction such as material, relational, or behavioral processes have not been explored. Second, the analysis was conducted on only one song, so the results cannot be generalized to other works by Henry Moodie or different song genres. For future research, it is recommended to combine ideational analysis with interpersonal and textual metafunction analysis in order to gain a deeper understanding of the message and meaning of the song.

AI USE AND DISCLOSURE

State whether generative AI tools were used in preparing the manuscript, which tools and for what purpose, or state that no AI tools were used.

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND INFORMED CONSENT

This study analysed publicly available song lyrics and did not involve human participants; ethical approval and informed consent were therefore not required.

CRediT AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

- Desi Lestari: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft.
- Fina Fatkhurizqia: Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft.
- Nadisa Apriani: Investigation, Writing – review & editing.
- Adinda Destiani Habibah: Validation, Writing – review & editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The lyrics analysed in this study are publicly available (Moodie, 2023). The clause-level coding is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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