

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Don't Look Up (2021) is a satirical science fiction movie directed by Adam McKay. This movie critiques the government's and the public's response to the global crisis. The story began with the finding of a giant comet by Dr. Randall Mindy and his student, Kate Dibiasky. This comet is predicted to hit earth in six months. Despite the accuracy of their calculations, their findings face skepticism and disbelief from many people. The media treats this news as entertainment rather than a serious threat. The government and stakeholders also prioritize their political reputation and economic interests over the upcoming disaster. It highlights the failure of communication between scientists and the people during a crisis. As the main character, Dr. Randall Mindy plays a crucial role in communicating information to the listeners about the existence and dangers of the comet in high-pressure situations. His words and expressions reflect how he views comets not simply as scientific objects, but as global threats. He also attempts to construct the comet as a real and serious threat through his words. Therefore, his utterances are relevant for linguistic analysis.

The movie *Don't Look Up* has been extensively studied through the lens of pragmatics and literature over the years. It is seen in works by Suryadi (2024), Swijana et al. (2024), Nisa et al. (2023), and Nirwana (2023). However, the way Dr. Randall Mindy uses language to assure his listeners about the comet through

transitivity systems has never been studied. Examining how Dr. Randall Mindy represented the comet is necessary to highlight his role as the main character. This can reveal the knowledge on how language can be useful as a tool for assuring people. Therefore, this study aims to explore how Dr. Randall Mindy assures his listeners about the existence and the danger of comets through the transitivity system.

One of the relevant linguistic frameworks for analyzing this movie is the transitivity system. Halliday & Matthiessen (2004:310) stated that transitivity structures express representational meaning. It means that every clause in a language serves as a way to represent our experience of the world. It is a grammatical system that helps us to express who is doing what to whom, when, where, and how. This linguistic tool enables researchers to examine how meaning is constructed in spoken and written texts. Transitivity consists of three main parts: the process, participant, and circumstances. We can understand how Dr. Randall Mindy uses language to represent the comet by analyzing a clause using those three components, whether as an object doing a physical action, an existing phenomenon, or having a relationship. This linguistic approach is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how language is used to construct meaning and belief in scientific and social contexts.

Halliday & Matthiessen's (2004) transitivity theory needed to uncover how Dr. Randall Mindy represents the action and role of the comet. This theory enables us to understand how Dr. Randall Mindy conceptualizes the reality of the comet, whether it is depicted as an active agent that threatens or as a passive object of an

event. So, applying this theory is relevant for analyzing Dr. Randall Mindy's utterances as a scientist who aims to assure the listeners through his statements about the comet.

1.2. Research Questions

There are the research questions of this study:

- 1) What are the types of transitivity processes used by Dr. Randall Mindy to represent the comet?
- 2) How does Dr. Randall Mindy assure his listeners about the existence and the danger of the comet through the transitivity system?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions, the objectives of this study are:

- 1) To identify and classify the types of transitivity processes used by Dr. Randall Mindy in representing the comet
- 2) To analyze how Dr. Randall Mindy uses the transitivity system to assure the listeners about the existence and the danger of the comet

1.4. Previous Studies

There are some previous studies related to this study. It is divided into two categories: studies that use *Don't Look Up* movie as the research object and studies that apply transitivity theory to different objects. The first group is the studies that used the same movie as the writer. First, Suryadi (2024) examines how satire can be used as a linguistic tool to critique the misuse of technology, leadership failures,

and environmental degradation. This study uses the Pentadic Satirical Script of Verbal Humor (PSSTVH) and Abrams' theory. The findings show that the film critiques the mindset that prioritizes profit over environmental issues. Next, Swijana et al. (2024) classify conflict types and identify conflict management strategies using Kenney's (1966) and Deetz and Stevenson's (1986) theories. The study found two man-versus-man conflicts and an avoidance management strategy. It reflects how people often avoid acknowledging the serious threat. Then Nisa et al. (2023) identify illocutionary acts using Searle's (1968) theory. The findings show expressive acts are dominant because there are so many surprising, sad, happy, annoying, and romantic moments. It reflects the character's emotional response to crises. Nirwana (2023) analyzes environmental destruction in the film using Greg Garrard's ecocriticism theory. The study finds inappropriate government response, political interests, and ineffective policies are factors contributing to environmental damage. This study also critiqued human indifference, media sensationalism, and political interference.

Next are studies that use Halliday's transitivity theory. First, Amardin (2024) examines the *Barbie* (2023) movie. The finding shows that Barbie and Gloria use relational and material processes to construct their feminist identities, while Ken uses material processes to illustrate how patriarchal dominance. The narrator uses the relational process to reinforce feminist traits. This study demonstrates that transitivity is a powerful tool for revealing how language shapes the expression of social themes.

Next, Herdiansyah et. al (2024) analyze Riddler's utterances in *The Batman* (2022). This study aims to reveal his ideology using Halliday's transitivity system and Goatly's participant power hierarchy. The results show Riddler used mostly material and relational processes. This indicates his focus on action and comparison.

Lubabah (2023) analyzes Tai Lung's Characterization in *Kung Fu Panda 1* (2008). There are found material, mental, verbal, relational, and behavioural processes. These processes represent Tai Lung's personality traits: evil, strong, talented, obsessive, smart, and arrogant. Russita (2021) examines love in Raymond Carver's short story. This study shows that all transitivity processes, with material processes being the most common, show love as an action. This study demonstrates that transitivity is a powerful tool for revealing how language shapes the expression of emotional themes.

Putri et al. (2021) examine how ideational meaning is constructed in the Jakarta Post and Channel News Asia (CNA) about the COVID-19 outbreak. The research revealed that material and verbal processes dominate in both news sources. These show that people are more interested in what authorities have done and how they report it. The Jakarta Post used material, verbal, relational, and mental behavioral processes to show a deeper understanding of the situation. CNA used material and verbal processes to focus on reporting actions and statistics. This study shows the differences between news sources in using language to shape meaning and emphasize actions.

Rahmasari (2020) analyzes a Guardian article to examine how the 2019 Hong Kong protests are represented. This study reveals how language describes agency and power. The study found that material processes are dominated shows action, power, and authority. Verbal processes highlight the voice of activists and authorities. Mental processes represent beliefs or feelings of the public and activists. Relational process indicates the identity or roles of an activist.

The similarity between this study and the previous study is the use of transitivity theory from Halliday. The difference in this study compared to the previous ones is the object. This study uses the movie *Don't Look Up* (2021). Several studies have analyzed the movie *Don't Look Up* from various perspectives in linguistics and literary studies. However, studies on this movie focusing on how Dr. Randall Mindy assures his listeners about the comet have not been conducted. This research will provide a unique opportunity to gain knowledge and expand understanding of the way the main character represents the comet.

1.5. Scope of the Study

This study is limited to Dr. Randall Mindy's utterances while telling the listeners about the comet. In this study, the utterances were taken from the beginning to the end of the film. The utterances were only referred to the comet marked with specific keywords that served to limit the type of data included in this study. The writer uses the theory of transitivity by Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) to examine the process types and the way Dr. Randall Mindy assures the listeners about the comet.

1.6. Writing Organization

This study comprises four interconnected chapters. Each chapter contains explanations relevant to the study. To produce a systematic research structure, the author organizes the content into the following four chapters.

CHAPTER I: This chapter contains the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, previous studies, scope of the study, and writing organization

CHAPTER II: This chapter presents the theories used in this study, the type of research, the data and population, the methods of collecting data, and the methods of analyzing data

CHAPTER III: This chapter contains the results and discussion of the data

CHAPTER IV: This chapter provides the conclusion of the study