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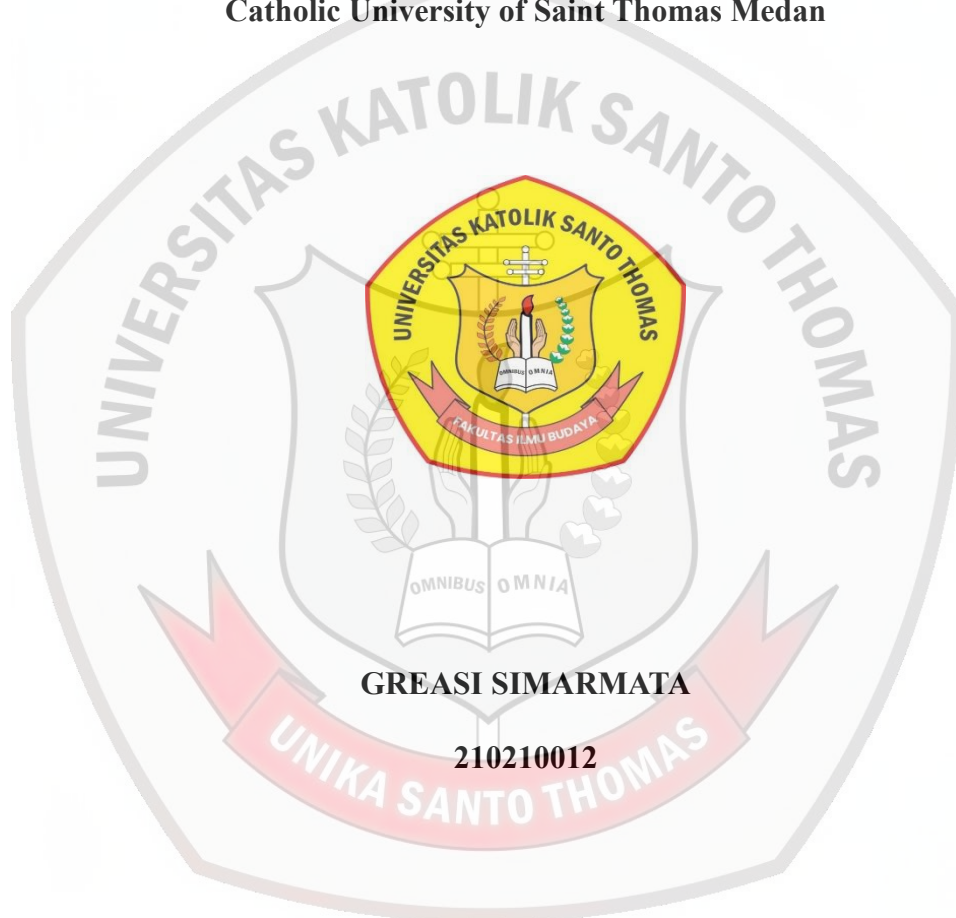
Word Formation and Transitivity Structures in the Representation of Self-Harm in a Little Life

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**WORD FORMATION AND TRANSITIVITY
STRUCTURES IN THE REPRESENTATION OF
SELF-HARM IN *A LITTLE LIFE***

**This undergraduate thesis is submitted as partial fulfilment to obtain
Bachelor Degree at English Department Faculty of Cultural Sciences
Catholic University of Saint Thomas Medan**



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**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
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THIS UNDERGRADUATE THESIS HAS BEEN APPROVED IN JULY 2025



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solemnly declare that this thesis entitled “Word Formation and Transitivity Structures in the Representation of Self-Harm in *A Little Life*” is my own work, free from plagiarism. Quotations are referenced in accordance with scientific writing ethics that apply. If it is proven that this thesis contains plagiarism deemed to have violated the rules, I am willing to accept sanctions for the act in accordance with the applicable regulations.

Medan, 30 July 2025

Greasi

Simarmata

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Grateful praise to the Almighty God for His grace and mercy, the writer has successfully completed the thesis entitled “Word Formation and Transitivity Patterns in the Linguistic Representation of Self-Harm in *A Little Life*. This thesis is submitted as one of the requirements to obtain a bachelor’s degree in English Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Catholic University of Saint Thomas Medan.

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The writer hopes that this thesis will be beneficial to the field of English Department. She acknowledges that this thesis is far from perfect. Therefore, constructive feedback and criticism from readers are welcomed.

Medan, July 2025
The Writer

Greasi Simarmata

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ABSTRACT

This study, discusses how language is used to represent acts of self-harm in Hanya Yanagihara's novel *A Little Life*. The research focuses on two main points: (1) the types of word formation used to create vocabulary related to self-harm, and (2) how this vocabulary is manifested in transitivity structures that describe the experience of self-harm in the narrative. The purpose of this study is to identify the morphological processes that emerge and analyze how these processes are structured within the framework of transitivity so as to present complex dimensions of meaning. The research method used is qualitative-descriptive, referring to the word formation theories of Yule (2010) and Carstairs-McCarthy, as well as the transitivity theory of Thompson (2014) within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics. The research data are taken from 185 clauses in the novel that explicitly contain descriptions of self-harm. The results of the study show two main findings. First, in terms of word formation, six of the ten categories proposed by Yule, eight were found, namely derivation (40 findings), borrowing (22), compounding with (17), conversion with two, abbreviation one finding, and multiple processes with three finding with a total of 87 words. Derivation was the most dominant type, indicating its role in enriching the vocabulary related to self-harm. Second, in terms of transitivity, all types of processes are found, with a dominance of material processes (85 clauses), followed by mental processes (45), relational processes (34), verbal processes (10), behavioral processes nine, and existential processes two. This confirms that self-harm is not only described as a physical act, but also as a mental condition, social relationship, and broader experience. Overall, this study concludes that word formation and transitivity complement each other. Morphological processes provide a rich vocabulary, while transitivity structures place this vocabulary within a layered narrative framework. Therefore, the representation of self-harm in novels is realized as a physical, emotional, and social experience.

Keyword: self-harm, SFL, transitivity, word formation

ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini membahas bagaimana bahasa digunakan untuk merepresentasikan tindakan melukai diri sendiri dalam novel *A Little Life* karya Hanya Yanagihara. Fokus penelitian diarahkan pada dua hal utama: (1) jenis-jenis pembentukan kata yang dipakai untuk membentuk kosakata terkait self-harm, dan (2) bagaimana kosakata tersebut diwujudkan dalam struktur transitivitas yang menggambarkan pengalaman melukai diri sendiri di dalam narasi. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi proses morfologis yang muncul serta menganalisis bagaimana proses tersebut tersusun dalam kerangka transitivitas sehingga mampu menghadirkan dimensi makna yang kompleks. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif-deskriptif dengan mengacu pada teori pembentukan kata dari Yule (2010) dan Carstairs-McCarthy, serta teori transitivitas dari Thompson (2014) dalam kerangka Linguistik Fungsional Sistemik. Data penelitian diambil dari 185 klausa dalam novel yang secara eksplisit memuat deskripsi tentang self-harm. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan dua temuan utama. Pertama, pada aspek word formation, dari sepuluh kategori yang dikemukakan Yule, enam di antaranya ditemukan, yaitu derivasi (40 temuan), borrowing (22), compounding (17), conversion (dua), abbreviation (satu), dan multiple processes (3 temuan), dengan total 309 kata. Derivasi menjadi jenis yang paling dominan, menunjukkan perannya dalam memperkaya kosakata yang berhubungan dengan self-harm. Kedua, pada aspek transitivitas, semua jenis proses ditemukan dengan dominasi proses material (85 klausa), disusul proses mental (45), relasional (34), verbal (10), behavioral (9), dan eksistensial (2). Hal ini menegaskan bahwa Tindakan melukai diri sendiri tidak hanya digambarkan sebagai tindakan fisik, tetapi juga sebagai kondisi mental, hubungan sosial, dan pengalaman yang lebih luas. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pembentukan kata dan transitivitas saling melengkapi: proses morfologis menyediakan kosakata yang kaya makna, sementara struktur transitivitas menempatkan kosakata tersebut dalam kerangka naratif yang berlapis. Dengan demikian, representasi perilaku melukai diri sendiri dalam novel terwujud sebagai pengalaman yang bersifat fisik, emosional, sekaligus sosial.*

Kata kunci: pembentukan kata, perilaku melukai diri, SFL, transitivitas

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