



Experiential Meaning Analysis on “Try Everything” Song By Shakira

Analisis Makna Pengalaman pada Lagu “Try Everything” Karya Shakira

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis makna pengalaman dalam lagu Shakira “Try Everything” menggunakan kerangka transitivitas Halliday (1994) dalam Linguistik Fungsional Sistemik. Dengan menggunakan desain kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini mengkaji proses, partisipan, dan keadaan dalam lirik untuk mengungkap bagaimana pengalaman manusia tentang ketekunan, optimisme, dan pertumbuhan pribadi dibangun. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa proses material mendominasi, menyoroti tindakan, upaya berulang, dan ketahanan dalam mengatasi tantangan. Proses mental menyampaikan keinginan, kesadaran, dan penerimaan kegagalan, mewakili refleksi internal, sementara proses relasional mengekspresikan kebenaran umum dan pengalaman manusia yang sama. Proses verbal berfungsi sebagai dorongan dan penegasan diri, melibatkan pendengar secara langsung. Keadaan waktu, sebab, tujuan, dan konsesi memberikan konteks, menempatkan pengalaman dalam kondisi realistis. Secara keseluruhan, interaksi elemen transitivitas ini menunjukkan bahwa lagu tersebut mengkomunikasikan pesan motivasi melalui representasi multidimensional dari tindakan, kognisi, nilai-nilai relasional, dan komunikasi. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman bagaimana musik inspiratif menyampaikan pengalaman manusia dan nilai-nilai kehidupan positif melalui pilihan linguistik.

Kata Kunci : Linguistik Fungsional Sistemik (SFL), Makna Pengalaman, Try Everything.

Abstract

This research analyzes the experiential meaning in Shakira’s song “Try Everything” using Halliday’s (1994) transitivity framework within Systemic Functional Linguistics. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, the research examines processes, participants, and circumstances in the lyrics to reveal how human experiences of perseverance, optimism, and personal growth are constructed. Findings indicate that material processes dominate, highlighting actions, repeated efforts, and resilience in overcoming challenges. Mental processes convey desire, awareness, and acceptance of failure, representing internal reflection, while relational processes express general truths and shared human experiences. Verbal processes function as encouragement and self-affirmation, engaging listeners directly. Circumstances of time, cause, purpose, and concession provide context, situating experiences in realistic conditions. Overall, the interaction of these transitivity elements demonstrates that the song communicates motivational messages through multidimensional representations of action, cognition, relational values, and communication. This research contributes to understanding how inspirational music conveys human experience and positive life values through linguistic choices.

Keywords : Experiential Meaning, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Try Everything.



INTRODUCTION

Language transcends mere communication; it serves as a profound semiotic resource that encapsulates human experiences, emotions, and ideologies. In literary forms such as song lyrics, language is deliberately crafted to articulate personal and societal realities—expressing lived experiences, actions, sentiments, and perceptions. Consequently, song lyrics can be regarded as a form of discourse, as they encode underlying values, beliefs, and meanings through chosen linguistic structures (Ramadhana & Heriyati, 2025; Simbolon et al., 2025).

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) presents language as a dynamic and multifaceted system of meaning-making, operating through three interconnected metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational metafunction specifically pertains to how language encapsulates and conveys human experience. Within this framework, experiential meaning emphasizes the mechanisms by which experiences are articulated within clauses, primarily through the transitivity system. This system comprises processes, participants, and circumstances, which collaboratively serve to depict actions, mental states, relationships, and states of being (Win, 2024; Sunardi & Aliffuddin, 2025). By analyzing experiential meaning, researchers gain valuable insights into how linguistic structures shape and construct particular representations of reality, highlighting the intricate relationship between language and perception.

In recent years, the application of experiential meaning and transitivity analysis has gained considerable prominence within linguistic research, especially in the examination of literary works and song lyrics. Indonesian researchers have showcased the efficacy of transitivity analysis in unveiling the ways songwriters encode profound emotional experiences and core life values. Dewi Max et al. (2023) demonstrated that material and relational processes predominantly feature in pop song lyrics, highlighting a focus on actions and states of being. Likewise, Sigalingging et al. (2022) observed that mental processes are frequently employed to articulate emotions such as sadness and introspection within song texts.

Recent research has illuminated the profound connection between experiential meaning in song lyrics and their thematic orientation. Sinaga et al. (2025) elucidate that transitivity processes—encompassing relational and mental actions—serve as vital tools for expressing emotional nuances and interpersonal dynamics, such as identity and emotional stance. Similarly, Purwandari et al. (2025) highlight that material processes and the theme-rheme structure within lyrics effectively depict actions, struggles, and thematic emphasis, especially in motivational and anthem-like compositions. Collectively, these insights underscore that the linguistic choices embedded in song lyrics are purposefully crafted to mirror the songwriter's intended messages and emotional landscapes, demonstrating a systematic reflection of meaning through language.

Although the transitivity research in Indonesia has advanced significantly, the majority of existing studies have predominantly centered on songs conveying emotional experiences, love, and interpersonal connections. Notable works such as Riandini's (2024) "*Transitivity Process in Sia's Selected Songs Lyrics*" and Sitinjak et al.'s (2025) "*Transitivity Process on Song Lyrics in Ariana Grande's Album 'Thank U, Next'*" exemplify how linguistic process types are employed to express emotional nuances within popular music. Nonetheless, there remains a comparative scarcity of researchers' attention dedicated to the linguistic analysis of motivational and inspirational songs



that emphasize perseverance, optimism, and resilience. This gap highlights a compelling opportunity for further exploration into the discourse of song lyrics that aim to inspire and motivate.

Motivational songs hold considerable linguistic importance, as they often portray themes of struggle, adversity, personal growth, and resilience. From an experiential standpoint, these songs offer a valuable reservoir of insights into how actions, emotions, and identities are conveyed through specific transitivity patterns (Sinaga et al., 2023; Simbolon et al., 2025). This approach enables researchers to uncover how linguistic structures actively serve to enhance and reinforce their motivational potency, making them powerful tools for inspiring and empowering listeners.

Shakira's song "Try Everything," featured in the animated film *Zootopia*, stands as an uplifting anthem that underscores the importance of perseverance, courage, self-confidence, and resilience in the face of setbacks. Despite its widespread acclaim and motivational resonance, there remains a scarcity of linguistic research examining how these core values are conveyed through experiential meaning. Accordingly, this research seeks to analyze the experiential meanings embedded within "*Try Everything*" by employing Halliday's transitivity system. The focus will be on identifying the various process types, participants, and circumstances that collectively shape the themes of persistence, hopefulness, and personal development conveyed in the song.

This research aims to make a meaningful contribution to the field of linguistic research, with a particular focus on the Indonesian context. By extending the analysis of experiential meaning to motivational song lyrics, it seeks to deepen our understanding of how language serves as a medium for articulating human experiences and promoting positive life values within popular music.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research applied a descriptive qualitative approach, emphasizing the detailed portrayal and interpretation of linguistic features within the text rather than reliance on statistical measurement. As Saragih (2023) stated that descriptive qualitative research is particularly well-suited for linguistic inquiry, as it centers on elucidating how meaning is constructed through language in authentic textual contexts. Accordingly, this research employed Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to scrutinize experiential meaning as manifested through the transitivity system, which dissects processes, participants, and circumstances embedded within clauses (Gerot & Wignell, 1995, as cited in Novari & Gumelar, 2022).

The primary data source comprised the lyrics of "*Try Everything*" by Shakira, released in 2016 as part of the *Zootopia* soundtrack. This song was intentionally chosen for its motivational and inspirational themes—such as perseverance, optimism, and self-confidence—rendering it an ideal text for exploring experiential meaning. As the data consisted exclusively of written material, the research involved no human participants.

The data were gathered through comprehensive document analysis. The researchers engaged in careful and repeated readings of the lyrics to develop thorough and nuanced understanding of the textual content. Subsequently, the lyrics were systematically segmented into clauses, serving as the fundamental units of analysis. Each clause was recorded and classified according to process types, participants, and circumstances, following Halliday's transitivity framework.

Employing qualitative discourse analysis, a method renowned for its capacity to interpret meaning through detailed examination of language use and structural context (Jayanti, Farikah &



Normawati, 2025), the research delved into the linguistic intricacies of the lyrics. Anchored in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the analysis aimed to identify and categorize transitivity elements within each clause, including process types, participants, and contextual circumstances. The frequency of each process type was then quantified to reveal prevailing patterns and thematic tendencies. The findings were interpreted through a qualitative lens, elucidating how the linguistic choices encapsulate experiential meaning and serve as vehicles for motivational messages. This approach underscores the power of SFL-based discourse analysis in uncovering profound semantic patterns embedded within textual expressions, offering insights into the deeper layers of meaning conveyed through language.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This analysis endeavors to elucidate how the song’s lyrics craft experiential meaning by examining the various types of processes, participants, and circumstances embedded within them. The findings reveal the presence of all principal transitivity processes with material processes predominating. This prominence underscores the song’s emphasis on portraying human experience through actions, efforts, and struggles. Additionally, mental and relational processes play a vital role in expressing emotions, self-awareness, and states of being, while the contextual elements of time, manner, and condition enrich the song’s motivational and inspirational messages. Together, these elements coalesce to create a nuanced and compelling narrative of human experience, showcasing the song’s depth and expressive power.

Table 1. Material Process.

Clause	Process	Participant
<i>I messed up tonight</i>	messed up	Actor: I
<i>I lost another fight</i>	lost	Actor: I / Goal: another fight
<i>I'll just start again</i>	start	Actor: I
<i>I keep falling down</i>	falling	Actor: I
<i>I keep on hitting the ground</i>	hitting	Actor: I / Goal: the ground
<i>I always get up</i>	get up	Actor: I
<i>Birds don't just fly</i>	fly	Actor: Birds
<i>They fall down and get up</i>	fall, get up	Actor: they
<i>I'll start again</i>	start	Actor: I
<i>I wanna try everything</i>	try	Actor: I / Goal: everything
<i>I'll keep on making those new mistakes</i>	making	Actor: I / Goal: mistakes

Material processes are expressed through clauses like “I messed up tonight,” “I lost another fight,” “I keep falling down,” and “I’ll start again.” In these expressions, the participant “I” consistently assumes the role of Actor, while the Goals—such as “another fight” and “the ground”—serve as obstacles or desired outcomes. This recurring pattern underscores themes of repeated struggle, unwavering perseverance, and renewal, thereby highlighting the singer's focus on resilience and determination as fundamental aspects of their emotional journey.



Table 2. Mental Process.

Clause	Process	Participant
<i>I wanna try everything</i>	wanna	Senser: I / Phenomenon: try everything
<i>To see what's next</i>	see	Senser: I
<i>Look how far you've come</i>	look	Senser: you
<i>I could fail</i>	could fail	Senser: I

Mental processes emerge as the second most prevalent category of processes, articulated through clauses like “I wanna try everything,” “to see what’s next,” and “I could fail.” In these constructions, the pronoun “I” functions as the Senser, embodying perception, thought, or feeling, while the Phenomena represent desires, perceptions, and an awareness of potential outcomes. The invocation of mental processes eloquently reveals the inner landscape of the persona, illustrating their motivation, hopefulness, and a nuanced acceptance of life's inherent uncertainties.

Table 3. Relational Process.

Clause	Process	Participant
<i>Nobody learns without gettin' it wrong</i>	learns	Carrier: nobody
<i>You've done enough</i>	have done	Carrier: you
<i>Sometimes we come last</i>	come	Carrier: we

Relational processes are prominently featured, exemplified by statements such as “Nobody learns without gettin’ it wrong,” “you’ve done enough,” and “Sometimes we come last.” These expressions articulate states of being and universal truths about human experience. In these constructions, the participants act as Carriers, embodying qualities or conditions that illuminate themes of learning and effort, thereby enriching understanding of the underlying messages conveyed.

Table 4. Verbal Process.

Clause	Process	Participant
<i>Don't beat yourself up</i>	beat	Sayer: implied you
<i>I won't give up</i>	give up	Sayer: I

Verbal processes are exemplified in expressions like “Don’t beat yourself up” and “I won’t give up,” which serve as powerful tools for motivation and self-affirmation. The invocation of such linguistic constructs highlights the role of language not merely as a communicative device but as a vital instrument in cultivating resilience and fostering a positive mindset.

Table 5. Circumstance.

Clause	Type of Circumstance
<i>Tonight</i>	Time
<i>Without gettin' it wrong</i>	Cause
<i>To see what's next</i>	Purpose
<i>Even though I could fail</i>	Concession
<i>Every day</i>	Time



Furthermore, the lyrics encompass a variety of circumstances that enrich their meaning—such as temporal markers (“tonight,” “every day”), causal phrases (“without gettin’ it wrong”), purpose clauses (“to see what’s next”), and concessive expressions (“even though I could fail”). These contextual elements serve to illuminate the timing, motivation, and conditions under which the described processes unfold. Ultimately, the findings reveal that the experiential significance of “Try Everything” is intricately woven through a harmonious interplay of actions, introspective thoughts, relational dynamics, and supplementary circumstances, all collectively emphasizing themes of perseverance and unwavering optimism.

Discussion

The results of this research demonstrate that the experiential meaning embedded within Shakira’s “*Try Everything*” is intricately crafted through four principal types of transitivity processes—material, mental, relational, and verbal—each further nuanced by diverse circumstances of time, cause, purpose, and concession. This underscores the song’s employment of an array of linguistic resources, capturing the multifaceted nature of human experience, encompassing active external actions, internal reflections, and social as well as communicative dynamics, thereby enriching its expressive depth and resonance.

Material processes stand out as the most prominent feature within the text, aligning closely with Halliday’s (1994) assertion that experiential meaning in written discourse often highlights actions, transformations, and active engagement with the external environment—especially in contexts emphasizing struggle, effort, and perseverance. In the song “*Try Everything*”, phrases such as “I messed up tonight,” “I lost another fight,” “I’ll start again,” and “I keep falling down” consistently depict “I” as the Actor, with Goals representing obstacles or challenges like “another fight” or “the ground.” This recurring depiction of effort, setbacks, and renewal underscores the song’s core message of persistence, resilience, and proactive striving for self-improvement. It underscores the idea that human experience is primarily expressed through concrete actions and direct interactions with the world. The prevalence of material processes in motivational lyrics echoes findings from prior research on song lyrics, where such processes tend to foreground actions, struggles, and thematic progression—particularly in popular and inspirational genres (Dewi Max et al., 2023; Purwandari et al., 2025; Simbolon et al., 2025). By focusing on repeated effort and tangible results, the lyrics deliver an empowering message that deeply resonates with listeners navigating challenges in their everyday lives.

Beyond the material processes, mental processes hold a profound significance in articulating the inner landscape of human experience. Phrases such as “I wanna try everything,” “to see what’s next,” and “I could fail” exemplify processes of desire, perception, and cognition—where “I” functions as the Senser, engaging with Phenomena that embody aspirations, self-awareness, and anticipations of potential outcomes. These mental processes serve as a vital complement to material actions, revealing the internal mechanisms that underpin external efforts and illustrating that perseverance and growth are as much cognitive and emotional endeavors as they are physical ones. Such insights resonate with recent research emphasizing the crucial role of mental processes in song lyrics, capturing themes of motivation, self-reflection, and goal setting (Simbolon et al., 2025; Sinaga et al., 2025). Through this interplay of thought and action, the song demonstrates that resilience emerges from both conscious effort and an internally driven mindset. This duality



amplifies the song's motivational power, allowing listeners to connect deeply with both the outward struggles and the internal reflections that fuel personal development and learning.

Relational processes play a vital role in shaping experiential meaning by articulating universal truths, collective experiences, and core social principles. Phrases such as “Nobody learns without gettin’ it wrong” and “You’ve done enough” position participants as Carriers, with the processes attributing qualities or conditions that emphasize universality and foster identification. These relational constructs underscore that mistakes, setbacks, and the journey of learning are natural, shared facets of human growth. This perspective aligns with research indicating that relational processes in song lyrics serve to express social and moral values, overarching truths, and interpersonal norms, thereby enabling audiences to connect deeply with the experiences and to internalize motivational messages (Sinaga et al., 2025). By incorporating relational processes, the lyrics cultivate empathy and encourage listeners to see challenges and opportunities for growth as common human experiences, thereby amplifying the song’s inspirational impact.

Verbal processes significantly enrich the experiential meaning of the lyrics by embodying themes of communication, encouragement, and self-motivation. Phrases such as “Don’t beat yourself up” and “I won’t give up” serve as powerful speech acts that directly engage the listener, providing guidance, reassurance, and uplifting affirmation. The deliberate inclusion of these verbal elements highlights how language functions as a vital motivational instrument, amplifying the song’s ability to evoke emotional and cognitive responses. This aligns with prior research in motivational discourse, which emphasizes that verbal processes enable the songwriter to forge meaningful interpersonal connections with the audience, offering emotional support and reinforcing constructive behaviors (Simbolon et al., 2025; Sinaga et al., 2025). Ultimately, verbal processes work in harmony with material and mental actions to craft a rich, multidimensional portrayal of perseverance—one that seamlessly intertwines action, reflection, and interpersonal influence.

The experiential processes of the song is enhanced by the surrounding circumstances, which offer vital temporal, causal, purposive, and concessive contexts. Temporal circumstances, such as “tonight” and “every day”, serve to specify when actions take place. Causal circumstances, exemplified by “without gettin’ it wrong,” illuminate the reasons behind these actions. Purposive circumstances, like “to see what’s next,” reveal the intentions guiding these endeavors. Meanwhile, concessive circumstances, such as “even though I could fail,” acknowledge the challenges and conditions that accompany perseverance. Together, these circumstances embed the song’s processes within authentic, relatable frameworks, emphasizing that effort, reflection, and encouragement are enacted within particular conditions and timeframes. This aligns with Halliday’s (1994) perspective, which asserts that circumstances deepen the experiential meaning by clarifying the contexts in which actions, thoughts, and expressions unfold, thereby offering a richly nuanced depiction of human experience.

The findings compellingly illustrate that the experiential meaning of “*Try Everything*” is intricately crafted through a sophisticated interplay of material, mental, relational, and verbal processes, all grounded within richly detailed contextual circumstances. Material processes highlight tangible actions and persistent efforts; mental processes shed light on inner motivations and self-reflection; relational processes articulate universal truths and shared human experiences; and verbal processes function as vital tools of encouragement and affirmation. These are all situated



within specific temporal, causal, purposive, and concessive contexts, which serve to clarify the conditions under which effort, motivation, and resilience are cultivated. Through this dynamic interaction, the song powerfully conveys a message of perseverance, optimism, and personal growth. Analyzing the experiential meaning of Shakira's *"Try Everything"* reveals that the song captures the multifaceted nature of human experience—encompassing action, cognition, relationships, and communication—offering listeners both practical guidance and emotional reassurance in overcoming obstacles and pursuing their aspirations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of Shakira's *"Try Everything"* through an experiential meaning lens illustrates how song lyrics serve as profound reflection of human experiences, especially those centered on perseverance, motivation, and personal development. By employing Halliday's (1994) transitivity framework, this research uncovered that the lyrics incorporate material, mental, relational, and verbal processes. Dominating the song are material processes, which highlight concrete actions, persistent efforts, and resilience in overcoming obstacles, thereby accentuating the song's inspiring message. Complementing these are mental processes that articulate internal states of desire, awareness, and acceptance of potential failure, emphasizing that true perseverance involves both cognitive understanding and emotional resilience. Relational processes evoke universal truths and shared human experiences, fostering a deep connection with listeners and reinforcing themes of growth and learning. Verbal processes act as powerful tools of encouragement, self-affirmation, and dialogue with the audience, further amplifying the song's motivational impact. The contextual elements, such as time, cause, purpose, and concession, provide essential background that clarifies the circumstances surrounding actions, thoughts, and expressions, enriching the overall portrayal of human resilience. Together, these linguistic features craft a cohesive narrative imbued with resilience, optimism, and self-belief, demonstrating the capacity of song lyrics to effectively convey uplifting messages. Future investigations might explore additional metafunctions or different genres of inspirational music to deepen our understanding of how language constructs motivation and encapsulates human experience.

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