

APPLYING HALLIDAY'S TRANSITIVITY THEORY TO THE JOE BIDEN'S FIRST ANNUAL SPEECH

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Abstract

The goals of this study are to investigate and describe what kinds of transitivity processes were proposed by Halliday and how they reveal in Joe Biden's first annual speech. The data in this study comes from the textual script of Joe Biden's speech on a web page. The descriptive qualitative method was used in this study, as well as data-gathering strategies such as observation and documentation. The procedures of identifying, classifying, and analyzing were used to analyze the data. There are five types of transitivity processes found by the researcher, namely mental process, material process, verbal process, relational process, and existential process as the results of this study where the findings show that mental processes appear the most in the script of Joe Biden's first annual public speech with a portion of 44.75%, amounting to 81 times the utterances appeared. It also means that Joe Biden's leadership involves a lot of affection processes related to feelings or senses, as evidenced by the mental processes that appear the most in the annual speech.

Keywords: *Joe Biden, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Transitivity Process, and Utterances*

Introduction

In recent years, the discussions of grammar have moved from a sentence-based perspective to more of a discourse-based perspective. The discussion of grammar from a discourse-based perspective goes along with the theory of M.A.K. Halliday, the Systemic Functional Grammar which is also known as Systemic Functional Linguistics Theory (SFLT). Considering SFLT as a new perspective in grammar, it has attracted many researchers to conduct research in this field. A number of researchers have explored SFLT in various data sources as well as applying transitivity systems as the concern of their research, such as news (Zhang, 2013; Viscido, 2014; Sidabutar, 2014; Ong'onda, 2016), advertisement (Patpong, 2008), essay (Rollins, 2012), movie script (Fikmawati, 2012; Viana, 2013; Setiawan, 2015), student's writing (Kurdali, 2012; Nurohmah, 2013; Oliveira, 2015), short story (Gumanti, 2014; Halima, 2019), debate (Zhang, 2017), student's text book (Salsabil, 2014; Anggun, 2016; Oriza, 2017), and novel (Rendadirza, 2020; Coetzee, 2020). These previous studies had captured all aspects of the transitivity system. In the meantime, to create new findings for the current study the writer not only presents the analysis of the transitivity process but also connects it with another subject, that is, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

The term CDA is used to refer more specifically to the critical linguistic approach of scholars who find the larger discursive unit of text to be the basic unit of communication. In the study of CDA, the writer intends to examine ideological construction since ideology becomes one of the main terms in CDA. All of the studies employ a three-dimensional model by Fairclough as the framework for the analysis. In this case, the researcher tries to analyze the ideology of Joe Biden's first annual speech as data sources by inserting a transitivity system in the description stage. The transitivity system works for examining the linguistic feature of the text. In this case, the description stage is limited to experiential values on the type of process and participant since it is based on a transitivity system.

This research is aimed at answering the following questions, what kinds of transitivity process proposed by Halliday reveals in Joe Biden's first annual speech? Then how does the

transitivity process which proposed by Halliday reveals in Joe Biden's first annual speech? As the scope of this study is the collaborative study of Critical Discourse Analysis with the new grammar perspective of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics Theory focusing on Transitivity system by investigating the pattern of transitivity process that reveals the linguistics strategies as well as its ideological construction of Joe Biden's first annual speech.

1. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics Theory

Systemic Functional Linguistics Theory is the development of grammar study from sentence-based perspective to more discourse-based perspective. Some of linguists have argued that the development of this theory is needed because the traditional explanations of grammar do not adequately capture grammatical selection in longer, real-world text (Paltridge, 2006: 127). Nazlia (2016: 12) explains that SFL is a theory which is introduced by M. A. K. Halliday, a professor of Linguistics from University of Sydney, Australia.

Halliday adopted this theory from his teacher named J.R. Firth. Firth developed Malinowski's concept about context of situation and context of culture which is known as system structure theory. Then, Halliday developed this theory to be the theory of language in context which is known as Systemic Functional Grammar. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistic Theory (SFLT) is a theory which talks about language and functional grammar. It maintains a perspective on language that is grounded in how we actually use language to construct reality and enact social relationships. This theory claims that language is functional. Functional means that language, like other semiotic systems, is a systemic resource for making and exchanging meaning.

A semantic system is organized into three main functional components, or "metafunctions". The three components are: ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Halliday & Webster, 2009: 5). Ideational Function is a function of language that is used to represent human experiences. Ideational function is divided into two sub-functions, logical and experiential. Logical function views language as natural logic and it is realized by the clause complexity system, while experiential function views language as representation of human experiences and it is realized by the transitivity system. Interpersonal function is a function used to maintain human relationship, it is realized through system of mood. Textual function is used to organize human experiences in the text (message), it is realized through theme system.

2. Transitivity System

Transitivity system belongs to experiential metafunction. The experiential metafunction focuses on the clause level in which the clause is viewed as the representation of human experience in reality through some processes. The processes can represent about what is going on in reality: of doing, happening, feeling, or being. Thus, clause is the most significant unit in this case (Halliday, 1985: 101). In transitivity process there are three major components, they are participant (attend the circumstances and do the process), process (regarded as various actions), and circumstances (represent time, place, manner, cause, accompaniment, matter and role). Here, these three components always appear in each type of transitivity process.

According to Halliday (2014: 334), "the transitive model is based on the configuration of Actor + Process. The Actor is construed as bringing about unfolding of the Process

through time; and this unfolding is either confined in its outcome to the Actor or extended to another participant, the Goal. The Goal is construed as being impacted by the Actor's performance of the process."

In other research, Halliday (2014: 107) states that a unit of perfect experience that is realized in clause consists of process, participant, and circumstance. Process refers to the activity that happens in a clause which is called a verb. A participant is the one or thing in a process. The circumstance is the environment where, when, why, or how a process happens and the participant is inside. The main experiment is a process, so at the clause level, the process decides the amount and the category of the participant. Besides, process decides the circumstance indirectly as well.

Besides, Kress (1976: 169) states that transitivity is representation in language processes, while Simpson (1993: 88) asserts that transitivity refers generally to how meaning is represented in the clause. Song (2013) defines transitivity as a grammatical system it deals with different types of processes which can be found in the language and the structures. In addition, Nguyen (2012) claims that transitivity can show how speakers/writers encode in language their mental reflection of the world and how they account for their experience of the world around them.

Beard (2000: 30) states that transitivity involves looking at the language used to describe:

- what happens
- who the participants are (both those who do something and those affected by what is done)
- what the circumstances are.

3. Types of Transitivity Process

Fowler (1991) assumes that a central insight of Halliday's model is that transitivity is the foundation of representation: it is the way the clause is used to analyze events and situations as being of certain types. Halliday (2014) has categorized processes into six kinds, three main processes: material process, mental process, relational process, and three complement processes: behavioral process, verbal process, and existential process.

a. Material Process: Process of Doing

'Material' processes are clauses of doing-&-happening: a 'material' clause construes a quantum of change in the flow of events as taking place through some input of energy. Halliday (2008) adds that they express the notion that some entity does something, which may be done to the other entity. According to Halliday (2014: 224), in the material process, there is always only one participant that is the Actor. If there is another participant, that is not a participant, yet the Goal. In line with Halliday, Thompson (2004) states that any material process has a participant of Actor who functions as the doer of the process. And it may have the participant of the Goal which is impacted by the process. The goal implies "directed at" in a clause as the impact of the Process. E.g. *Zoey is eating banana now.*

b. Mental Process: Process of Sensing

Halliday (2014: 245) states that 'Mental' clauses are concerned with our experience of the world of our own consciousness. Mental processes express such mental phenomena as

“perception” (see, look), “reaction” (like, please), and “cognition” (know, belief, convince). Zhao (2018) adds that the mental clause involves phenomena described as a state of mind or psychological events. It expresses affection, cognition, and perception. A mental process involves two participants, a senser and a phenomenon. E.g. *Christ sees the rainbow*.

Thompson (2000) gives four criteria for distinguishing between material and mental processes. First, mental processes always involve at least one human participant. Second, the criterion is that the kind of entity which can fill the relevance of the other participant in a mental process is less restricted than the entities which can act as participants in a material process. The third reason is tense. The fourth is that mental processes are reversible.

c. Relational Process: Process of Being

Halliday (2014: 259) states “Relational clauses serve to characterize and to identify.” Here, the participants are called as carrier and attributive in e.g. *The weather is humid*. The participants are called token (the thing which is defined) and value (the definition) e.g. *Joey is a boy*; *The boy is Joey*.

d. Verbal Process: Process of Saying

Verbal processes are those of exchanging information. In other words, a verbal process is a process that shows the activity related to information. Chen (2007: 39) states that the verbal process is used to achieve the effect of making the Sayer seem authoritative. While Saragih (2010: 8) states that verbal processes show activities related to information. Commonly used verbs are command, explain, ask, say, tell, talk, praise, boast, describe, etc. In this process, there are three further participants in addition to the Sayer: (1) Receiver, (2) Verbiage, (3) Target. E.g. *She commands Suzan to go*.

e. Behavioral Process: Process of Behaving

Halliday (2014: 301) states that behavioral processes are almost always middle: the most typical pattern is a clause consisting of Behaver and Process only, like *Don't breathe!* *He's always gambling*. Behaver is the participant in a behavioral process. If there is another participant in this process, it is called a phenomenon. Besides, Gerot and Wignell (1994: 60) say that behavioral processes are processes of physiological and psychological behavior, like breathing, dreaming, snoring, smiling, hiccupping, looking, watching, listening, and pondering.

e. Existential Process: Process of Existing

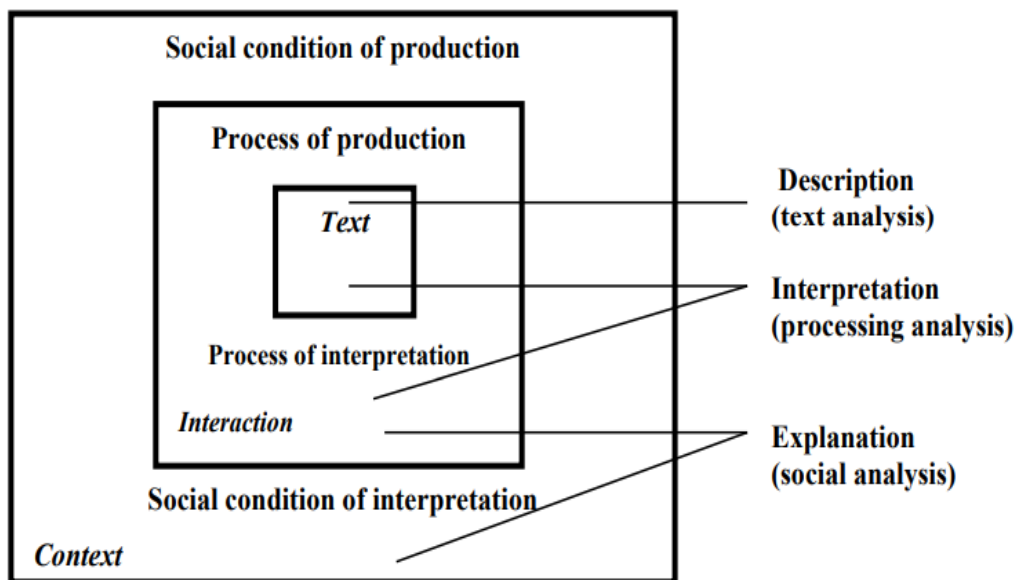
Existential processes represent that something exists or happens in life. Hancock (2005: 240), an existential process is a clause that presents an entity as existing without predicating anything additional about it. It is marked by “there” as the subject in position. In every single existential process, there is an Existent. E.g. *There hangs a painting*.

This transitivity analysis examines public speech or the first annual speech delivered by the 46th President of the United States of America, Joe Biden. Lucas (2000) defines public speech as the process of speaking to a group of people in a structured, deliberate manner intended to inform, influence, or entertain the listeners. In addition, Priyana (2008) has stated a concept of speech, “A speech is a formal talk given usually to a large number of people on a special occasion.” To deliver a speech, the speaker starts by greeting the audience, then addressing the audience, explaining the point, making some wishes, and finally closing the speech.

4. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Linguistics (CL) or also known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is one of the approaches to discourse analysis which adopts a macro analytical view of language. It means that the analysis of this study is not only concerned with the text itself (micro-analysis) but also involves the relation of the text with the context (macro-analysis). CDA research specifically considers how language works within institutional and political discourses (e.g. in education, organization, media, government), as well as specific discourses (around gender and class), in order to uncover overt or more often covert inequalities in social relationships (Litosseliti, 2010: 126).

According to Fairclough (1989: 26) in seeing language as discourse and social practice, one is committing oneself not just to analyzing texts, nor just to analyzing processes of production and interpretation, but to analyzing the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions. This notion produces what we call the dimensions of discourse, contained in texts, interactions, and contexts. Corresponding to these dimensions of discourse, Fairclough relates them to the three stages of analysis of Critical Discourse Analysis, namely: description (textual analysis), interpretation (processing analysis), and explanation (social analysis). The relation of the three dimensions of discourse with the stages analysis of CDA can be seen clearly through the diagram below:



5. Ideology

Sargent (1981: 3) asserts that an ideology is a value or belief system that is accepted as fact or truth by some group. It is called a 'system' because ideology refers to a belief that is organized. He adds that ideology is composed of sets of attitudes toward the various institutions and processes of society. It provides the believer with a picture of the world both as it is and as it should be, and, so doing. Here, the ideology which is shared by a group of people can emotionally affect people's attitude, it influences an individual or other groups of people to choose, act or do something.

According to Saragih (2014: 151), ideology is a construct, thought, concept, theory, or meaning idealized by society as a guide to act internally and a filter to react externally for the betterment of the members. In other words, ideology is the meaning on which members of the

society consciously or unconsciously depend to behave among themselves and towards outsiders. The relation between ideology and language is a construal-semiotic one where at one time in its turn language use affects ideology. Ideology is developed and deeply rooted in the practices of society or community members and specifically realized in text or language use. Thus, in any text, there is an underlying ideology.

Method

In this study, a descriptive-qualitative method was considered the most appropriate research design to be adopted. Ary (2010: 474) noted that descriptive qualitative inquiry dealt with data that were in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers and statistics, in this case, the data itself were the text of speeches. The source of data for this study was the textual script of Joe Biden’s speech from a web page. Furthermore, the data analysis was in the form of clauses taken from the textual script of Joe Biden’s speech. The instrument of the data collection was YouTube and a web page. Also other instruments such as notebooks, pens, etc. Those tools were used for searching and gathering the information and analyzing the data.

The data were collected based on the function such as material process clauses were collected with the same process, and circumstance clauses were too. The procedure had been done by searching the video of Joe Biden’s first annual speech and trying to find the script using a web page, downloading the video and the scripts, watching the video, observing and reading the script, then changing the script as the data to the clauses form.

The process defined the functions of the participant. The majority of kind of process employed in the text was used to describe the character of the text. The technique of analyzing the data in this study was by observing and writing down every clause within the text as data, examining every element, then identifying the text based on syntagmatic and paradigmatic, syntagmatic is related to the analysis of syntaxes such as nouns, verb, adjective, and adverb. The data were analyzed based on transitivity theory from LFS, paradigmatic is associated with the functions such as; (i) participant serves as actor, goal, beneficiary, and others, (ii) process serves as a material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential process, (iii) circumstance serves as elaboration, extension, enhancement, and projection. Then classify the data into six types of transitivity processes, analyze the data, and lastly draw a conclusion.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1. The Proportion of Process in the Text

No.	Types of Process	Number	Percentage
1.	Material	36	19.89
2.	Mental	81	44.75
3.	Verbal	10	5.52
4.	Relational	46	25.42
5.	Behavioral	0	0
6.	Existential	8	4.42

Total**181****100**

Based on the table above, we can see that mental processes appear the most in the script of Joe Biden's first annual public speech with a portion of 44.75%, amounting to 81 times the utterances appeared. While in the second position, there is a relational process with a portion of 25.42% with the quantity 46 times the utterances appeared. Followed by a material process which amounted to 36 utterances appearing as much as 19.89% of the total existing processes, then verbal process occurred 10 times of utterances with a portion of 5.52%, and the last is existential processes having the least portion of 4.42% with a total the utterances appears 8 times. As for the behavioral process in this case nothing appears at all.

Table 2. The Proportion of Circumstance in the Text

No.	Types of Circumstance	Number	Percentage
1.	Extent	10	6.76
2.	Location	44	29.73
3.	Manner	27	18.24
4.	Cause	8	5.40
5.	Contingency	19	12.84
6.	Accompaniment	8	5.40
7.	Role	4	2.70
8.	Matter	28	18.93
9.	Angle	0	0
	Total	148	100

Based on the table above, we can see that location circumstances appear the most in the script of Joe Biden's first annual public speech with a portion of 29.73%, amounting to 44 times the utterances appeared. While in the second position, there are matter circumstances with a portion of 18.93% with the quantity 28 times the utterances appeared. Followed by manner circumstances which amounted to 27 utterances appearing as much as 18.24% of the total existing processes, then contingency circumstances occurred 19 times of utterances with a portion of 12.84%, and the less appeared circumstances are extent (10 times), cause (8 times), accompaniment (8 times), also role circumstance (4 times). However, the angle circumstance did not appear in Joe Biden's annual speech.

In answering the first question, there are five kinds of transitivity processes proposed by Halliday reveals in Joe Biden's first annual speech, they are mental processes that appear as the most process in the script of Joe Biden's first annual public speech with a portion of 44.75%, amounting to 81 times the utterances appeared. Then relational process with a portion of 25.42% with the quantity 46 times the utterances appeared. Followed by a material process which amounted to 36 utterances appearing as much as 19.89% of the total existing processes, then verbal process occurred 10 times of utterances with a portion of 5.52%, and the last is existential processes having the least portion of 4.42% with a total the utterances appears 8 times. As for the behavioral process in this case nothing appears at all. In this case, we can conclude that President Joe Biden's leadership involves a lot of affection processes

related to feelings or senses, as evidenced by the mental processes that appear the most in the annual speech. Furthermore, the location circumstance appeared the most, which means that President Joe Biden want to show where the process of action will take place regarding to the war between Russia and Ukraine.

Describing the second question's answer about how the transitivity process proposed by Halliday was revealed in Joe Biden's first annual speech by dividing the manuscripts of President Joe Biden's annual speech into several sentences that were then separated one by one and grouped into a transitivity system.

Conclusions

1. There are five types of transitivity processes found by the researcher, namely mental process, material process, verbal process, relational process, and existential process.
2. Joe Biden's leadership involves a lot of affection processes related to feelings or senses, as evidenced by the mental processes that appear the most in the annual speech. Furthermore, as the location circumstance appeared the most, which means that President Joe Biden want to show where the process of action will take place regarding the war between Russia and Ukraine.

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