A Transitivity Analysis of American President Donald J. Trump's Inaugural Address

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Abstract

Based on transitivity system in Halliday's Systemic-Functional Grammar, this paper aims to conduct transitivity analysis of American president Donald J. Trump's inaugural address in 2017. A combination of quantitative method and qualitative method is applied to explore the distribution and functions of six transitivity process in the inaugural address. It is found that among the six processes, material processes (68.6%) highly dominate the speech. Relational processes (15.7%) ranks the second, followed by existential processes (6.4%), behavioral processes (5.0%) and mental processes (3.6%), while verbal processes (0.7%) seldom appear in the speech. The study also shows the different functions of each process. President Trump frequently uses material processes to paint a bleak picture of America and to describe new actions the government will take. He also uses relational processes to lay out a new vision for America.

Key words: transitivity analysis, process types, Donald J.Trump's inaugural address.

1. Introduction

Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar as a tool can be used in every genre of language to unveil the hidden meaning of language. As a sub-system of ideational function in Systemic Functional Grammar, transitivity is regarded as an effective model for discourse analysis. Since Halliday (1971) made a tentative step towards applying the transitivity model in Systemic Functional Grammar to William Golding's The Inheritor, the application of the transitivity theory to discourse analysis has received wide attention at home and abroad. In China, many scholars have applied transitivity analysis in different genres, like literary works, news discourse, political discourse, advertisement analysis, etc. (Shen, 2006; Huang, 2001; Gong & Fang, 2005; Yang, 2004). In recent years, there are much exploration of transitivity analysis in inaugural address. For instance, Chen (2008) conducted a transitivity analysis on President Bush's inaugural address in 2005 and found the distribution of the six processes. Wang (2009) analyzed the different kinds of processes from the perspective of transitivity in Obama's inaugural address in 2008. Li (2010) conducted a transitivity analysis on Franklin D.Roosevent and Barack Obama's inaugural addresses.

American president Donald J. Trump delivered an inaugural address on 20th January 2017 and has been sworn in as the 45th president of the United States. In the speech, he addresses the national crises and world situations of the moment and also elaborates his fundamental political principles and particular political policies for the next four years on this occasion.

Previous studies of transitivity analysis have provided significant implications to the present study. However, there are limited studies which associate Halliday's transitivity model with president Trump's inaugural address. Thus, this paper sets out to explore how the transitivity processes are realized in president Trump's inaugural address on the base of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar from the perspective of transitivity system.

2 Theoretical Framework
2.1 Transitivity system in Systemtic Functional Grammar

Halliday's Systemtic Functional Grammar is a tool to explore the specific type of linguistic choices that are used for some specific purposes. Systemic Functional Grammar deals with three meta-functions i.e. ideational, interpersonal and textual (Halliday, 1994). In ideational function, language is used to convey new information, to communicate a content that is unknown to the hearer (Hu, 2006). According to Hu (2006), "The interpersonal function embodies all uses of language to express social and personal relations". Relating to textual function, Hu (2006) held that "The textual function refers to the fact that language has mechanism to make any stretch of spoken or written discourse into a coherent and unified text and make a living passage different from a random list of sentences".

The theories of transitivity system play an important part in the ideational function, by which the grammatical system is achieved. In the domain of functional grammar, transitivity is a semantic notion, and the transitivity system refers to a system for describing the whole clause (Halliday, 1994). As Halliday (1994) observed, the transitivity system construes the experience the experience of world through a manageable set of process types. These six processes are material processes, mental processes, relational processes, behavioral processes, verbal processes and existential processes (Halliday, 1994).

In principle, a process is made up of three components: (i) the process itself; (ii) participants in the process; (iii) circumstantial elements and other components in the process (Halliday, 1994). Typically, the process is realized by the verbal group, the participant by the nominal group, and the circumstantial element by the adverbial group or the prepositional phrase. The concepts of process, participant and circumstantial element offer the frame of reference to compound the experience of what goes on outside and inside.

2.1.1 Material Process

Material processes are processes of doing. They express the notion that some entity does something which may be done to some other entity (Halliday, 1994). There are two inherent participants involved in material processes. The first is the Actor, which is an obligatory element and expresses the doer of the process (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The second is the Goal, which is an optional element and expresses the person or entity whether animate or inanimate affected by the process.

Material processes do not necessarily represent concrete, physical events. They may be abstract doings and happenings. Clauses reflecting material processes can be active and passive voice. Generally, choosing a passive clause may result from the suppression of the Actor, that is, the Actor may not appear explicitly in the clause. According to Halliday (1994), the material clauses can be divided into a transitive one and an intransitive one according to whether they carry a Goal in the process. When judging the material processes, the following questions will be useful: (i) What did X do? (ii) What happened to Y? (iii) Who by?

The following are some examples of material process:

Table 1 Examples of material process (i)

Actor	Process: material	Goal
They	built	a house.
The mayor	dissolved	the committee.

(cited from Halliday, 1994: 111)

Table 2 Examples of material process (ii)

Goal	Process: material	Actor
The tourist	was caught by the lion.	

(cited from Halliday, 1994: 110)

2.1.2 Mental Process

Mental process refers to a process of sensing which is concerned with the sense of thoughts, observations and sentiments. It is actually a reflection of people's awareness of states of being. There are four sub-types of sensing in mental clauses: perceptive (processes of seeing, hearing, etc.), cognitive (processes of deciding, knowing, understanding, etc.), desiderative (processes of wanting, etc.) and emotive processes of liking, hating, regretting, etc.).

There are two participants associated with a mental process, that is, Sensor and Phenomenon. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) observed that, unlike material processes, mental processes always involve at least one human-like participant or conscious being that can feel, think or perceive. This participant is known as

the Sensor. The Sensor is not only confined to human beings but can be any object, animate or not, that can be treated as conscious, for example, the old car in the sentence the old car is recalling his youth. The other participant is the Phenomenon which is the entity being sensed, felt, thought, or perceived by the sensor. It may be not restricted to a thing but an act or a fact, like the clause John realized that it was the truth.

However, one of the two participants in a mental process may be not explicitly involved (Thompson, 2000). There may be a Sensor but no Phenomenon, like in the clause "Jill can't see".

The following are some examples of mental process:

Table 3 Examples of Mental process

Sensor	Process: mental	Phenomenon
Mary	liked	the gift.
Tim	realized	that he was in a big city.
Jill	can't see.	

(cited from Halliday, 1994: 114)

2.1.3 Relational Process

Relational Process involves states of being (including having). In a relational process, a relationship is being set up between two separate entities, but without suggesting that one entity affects the other in any way (Halliday, 1994).

Relational processes can be classified into two modes: Attributive and Identifying. They are classified according to whether they are being used to identify something or to assign a quality to something (Gerot and Wignell, 1994). According to Halliday (1994), the English system operates with three main relational processes types: (1)Intensive "x is a" (2) Circumstantial "x is at a" (where "is at" stands for "is at, in, on, for, with, about, along, etc.") (3) Possessive "x has a".

Integrating the two modes and three types, six categories of relational process come out:

Table 4 Examples of relational process

Type mode Mode	Attributive	Identifying
Intensive	John is wise.	John is the monitor. The monitor is John.
Circumstantial	The meeting is on Tuesday.	Yesterday is the fifth. The fifth is yesterday.
Possessive	Peter has a piano.	The piano is Peter's. Peter's piano is that piano.

(cited from Halliday, 1994: 119)

2.1.4 Behavioral Process

Behavioral processes are processes of physiological and psychological behavior, like breathing, dreaming, smiling, looking, listening, and pondering. (Gerot and Wignell, 1994). Behavioral processes are concerned with the outer reflection of our inward thoughts. They are the least salient of six process types, and the boundaries of behavioral processes are indefinite, they are partly material and partly mental (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). There is only one participant labeled as Behaver, which is typically a conscious being. In some clauses, there may be another participant: the Range, which is not a real participant but merely adds specification to the process.

In general, there are five sub-types of the behavioral processes which can be recognized as typical: (i) processes of consciousness represented as forms of behavior, e.g. look, watch, stare, listen, think, worry, dream; (ii) verbal processes as behavior, e.g. chatter, grumble, talk; (iii) physiological processes manifesting states of consciousness, e.g. cry, laugh, smile, frown, sigh, snarl, wine; (iv) other physiological processes, e.g. breathe, cough, faint, yawn, sleep; (v) bodily postures and pastimes, e.g. sing, dance, lie(down), sit(down) (Halliday, 1994).

The following are some examples of behavioral process:

Table 5 Examples of behavioral process

Behaver	Process	Range
She	gave	a faint sign.
My sister	coughed.	

(cited from Halliday, 1994: 139)

2.1.5 Verbal Process

A verbal process is the process of saying. `Saying' conveys any kind of symbolic exchange of meaning, like the report says there is an accident. The verbal process exists on the borderline between mental and relational processes. It manifest the consciousness of human in the form of language, like saying and meaning, etc. (Thompson, 2000).

There is always one participant labeled as the Sayer including both human and anything that owns the ability of exchanging information and meaning. Three others participants, namely Receiver, Verbiage, and Target is involved in the verbal clause. The Verbiage is interpreted as the content of what is said and the name of the saying. The Receiver represents the addressee to whom the saying is directed, whereas the Target is the entity targeted by the process of saying. Here are some examples of verbal process:

Table 6 Examples of verbal process

Sayer	Process: verbal	Target	Receiver	Verbiage
He	told		me	the truth.
The report	says			that there is an accident.
She	praised	him.		

(cited from Halliday, 1994: 140)

2.1.6 Existential Process

Existential process represent processes of existing and happening. It expresses existence of an entity without predicting anything else of it. It is on the borderline between the relational process and the material process. The existential process is easy to recognize because the sentence pattern is normally started with "there" or with the verb "exist" (Halliday, 1994) There are also other verbs indicating this process, such as happen, arise, flourish, etc.

In existential process, there is only one participant labeled as Existent referring to the entity or event which is being said to exist. The Existent can be any kind of phenomenon, such as person, object, institution, action, or event.

Some examples of existential process are showed in the following figure:

Table 7 Existential process (i)

	Process: existential	Existent	Circumstance
There	is	a robbery	in the street.
There	hangs	a portrait	on the wall.

(cited from Halliday, 1994: 142)

Table 8 Existential process(ii)

Existent	Process:existential	Circumstance	
Life	exists	in the space.	

(cited from Halliday, 1994: 143)

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

The text selected for the study is American president Donald J.Trump's inaugural address delivered in Washington, D.C. USA on 20th January 2017. In order to get the reliable research results, the text of the speech is downloaded from the official website of the White House.

President Trump's inaugural address consists of 1,433 words and 140 clauses. In this address, president Trump talked about the economic situation of America, his political principles and foreign policies, the actions to be taken in order to improve the situations, the means to protect and boost the American economy, and some other aspects. This address also covers issues and areas such as employment, education, infrastructure, etc. The key word in that speech is only - America interests.

3.2 Research Questions

In the process of transitivity analysis, the following questions will be answered:

(1)What is the distribution of six process types in president Trump's inaugural address?

(2) What are the functions of six process types embodied in president Trump's inaugural address?

3.3 Research Methods

A combination of quantitative method and qualitative method is applied in this research. Quantitative methods are used to represent the data in the form of table for objectivity while qualitative methods are used for in-depth analysis and interpretation. Transitivity system of Systemic Functional Grammar has been adopted for analysis on clause level.

3.4 Research Procedures

The transitivity analysis of processes in American president Donald Trump's inaugural address follows the following four steps:

First, the author will identify all the ranking clauses, which is the basic unit of the process analysis, and then obtains the number of the clauses. In the course of calculating clauses, the author sticks to the following rules from Halliday (1971): As for dependent clauses, we only calculate the finite clauses (traditionally adverbial clauses, object clauses, non-defining relative clauses), excluding those non-finite clauses (traditionally to-infinitive clauses, present and past participle clauses) and embedded clauses(traditionally subject clauses, predicative clauses, appositive clauses, and defining relative clauses); For the paralleled or paratactic clauses or verb phrases, the author calculates them respectively.

Second, the author will identify the process types of the chosen clauses by adopting the criteria set by Halliday. Hallidy (1994:173) figured out the principal criteria for distinguishing the types of process, taking account of the number and kind of participants, the directionality and voice, the pro-verb, the form of the unmarked present tense, and the phonological properties of the verb. These are the basis on which the transitivity analysis in this paper mainly depends.

Third, the number of each process type is to be counted, and then the percentage of each type of process is calculated. The table will be given explaining the distribution of each process type in president Trump's inaugural address.

Finally, following quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis will be adopted to interpret and explain the functions of each process type. Since language is produced in certain language context, the different functions of each type of process in the inaugural address are interpreted, taking the social and historical background into account.

4 Results and Discussions

4.1 Distribution of the Six Process Types in President Trump's Inaugural Address

As for the inaugural address delivered by president Trump, the distribution of each process type is exhibited below:

Table 9 Distribution of six processes

Process	Material	Relational	Existential	Behavioral	Mental	Verbal	Total
Number	96	22	9	7	5	1	140
Percentage	68.6%	15.7%	6.4	5.0%	3.6%	0.7%	100%

A total of 140 ranking clauses are found in this president's inaugural address and all the six process types are found to have occurred in the address, as indicated in Table 9. Material processes take a lion's share accounting for 68.6% of all the clauses. Relational processes come a distant second with a total of 22 (15.7%). Existential, behavioral and mental clauses have an overall representation of 6.4%, 5.0% and 3.6% respectively. The occurrence of verbal clauses is very insignificant, with 0.7%. Significant differences are found in the frequencies of the six process types in this speech, which will be further discussed in the following sections.

4.2 Functions of the Six Process Types in President Trump's Inaugural Address
4.2.1 Functions of Material Processes

From Table 9, we can see that in president Trump's inaugural addresses, the material processes take up the highest proportion with 96 processes or 68.6%. This number means that there is a process of action. One reason for its dominant role is its expressiveness and descriptiveness. Through material process, president Trump explains the situations they face and the challenges they encounter, displays American's power for actions and restores American people's confidence. In addition, a large amount of material processes will make his speech objective and vivid. In his speech, president Trump asks all the people in the room that, he along with the people will make America better by doing some revitalization. This part will give an analysis of the material processes used in the inaugural addresses, and classify the main events and entities that are mostly described by material processes.

4.2.1.1 Material Processes in Describing the Situations

In president Trump's Inaugural addresses, president Trump frequently use material processes to portray the United States as a nation in decline and to point out the underlying reasons. Here are some examples:

Example 1: For too long, a small group in our nation's Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost.

Example 2: Washington flourished – but the people did not share in its wealth.

Example 3:The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country.

Example 4: For many decades, we've enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry.

Example 5: We spent trillions and trillions of dollars overseas while America's infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay.

Example 6: We've defended other nations' borders while refusing to defend our own.

From the above examples, we can see that many material processes are used to paint a bleak picture of America as a country plagued by dismal political leadership, a devastated manufacturing sector, unemployment, crime, poverty, etc. President Trump sharply criticizes Washington's power elite. He blames past politicians for "refusing to defend our border". He attacks companies that ship jobs overseas. President Trump attributes all of the decline in manufacturing and the high unemployment rate to foreign trade. Since the material process is the process of "doing", it gives the audience a feeling of power and strength. It is a good way to emphasize the passive state of the country.

4.2.1.2 Material Processes in Describing the Actions of the New Administration

In the description of the actions that the newly elected administration will take, material processes are widely used. President Trump uses material processes to set out his political and economic principles that will govern the new administration by demonstrating what the government will do for their people in the future. Consider instances below:

Example 7:… but we are transferring power from Washington DC and giving it back to you, the people.

Example 8: We will no longer accept politicians who are all talk and no action.

Example 9: The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer.

Example 10: Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families.

Example 11: We will build new roads, and highways, and bridges, and airports, and tunnels, and railways all across our wonderful nation.

Example 12: We will get our people off of welfare and back to work – rebuilding our country with American hands and American labor.

Example 13: We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to follow.

Example 14: We will reinforce old alliances and form new ones – and unite the civilized world against radical Islamic terrorism.

Above examples describe the actions the new government will take to improve the situation. This conveys president Trump's idea of healing America, which is to carry out policies that are aimed at putting America first. He promises to build highways and airports, put Americans to work, and rebuild infrastructure. All these concrete, tangible actions make his speech more powerful and convincing and illustrate his determination to change and take actions immediately. All these actions to be taken also give us some hints about president Trump's political ideology–"America first". In president Trump's mind, the America First policy will bring back America's wealth and protect America's prosperity.

In addition, from the examples, we can see that the Actors of the material processes listed above are mostly personal pronoun we, which are the people who will carry out the policies. The use of we indicates that the president wants to summon the people to take actions together. The widely use of material processes in describing actions demonstrates president Trump's address is about action and success instead of rhetoric and mere talk. All these concrete, tangible actions make his speech more powerful and convincing.

4.2.1.3 Material Processes in Appealing Unity, Loyalty, and Patriotism

In president Trump's Inaugural addresses, president Trump also frequently use material processes to call for unity, loyalty, and patriotism. Here are some examples:

Example 15: When you open your heart to patriotism, there is no room for prejudice.

Example 16: We must speak our minds openly, debate our disagreements honestly, but always pursue solidarity.

Example 17: We share one heart, one home, and one glorious destiny.

From the above examples, it can be seen that in president Trump's inaugural address, there is an appeal, or maybe even a demand for unity, loyalty, and patriotism. President Trump articulates the power of national

solidarity boldly — "we share one heart, one home, and one glorious destiny." Through material processes, he encourages all the people to unite to take actions to "Make America Great Again". That's the task of a president -- to bring people together and pull the country together.

4.2.2 Functions of Relational Process

Table 9 shows that relational processes in president Trump's Inaugural Address holds 15.7% of all the processes. Although being less than that of material process, the percentage is far higher than that of other processes. This number means that in president Trump's speech, he tries to convince his people that he will be a great president. Through relational process, president Trump also tells all the people who come for his speech to believe that he will make America better than before.

In the inaugural address, there are many relational processes used to describe a new vision for America. Some examples are showing below:

Example 18: When America is united, America is totally unstoppable.

Example 19: The time for empty talk is over.

Example 20: Their victories have not been your victories;

Example 21: ...this moment is your moment.

Example 22: It belongs to everyone gathered here today and everyone watching all across America.

Example 23: And this, the United States of America, is your country.

Example 24: Their pain is our pain.

Example 25: We are one nation.

Example 26: The oath of office I take today is an oath of allegiance to all Americans.

From the examples, we can see that the relational process is a good choice to describe clearly the attributes of new vision for America. From the examples, president Trump defines a new role for the government, for the public, for patriotism, for America First. This implies that president Trump does not focus his attention only on the challenges he will encounter, but he also believes in bright future of the country. Through this way, he also gives American people confidence to face challenges and rebuild a new America.

President Trump chooses processes of being as an appropriate way to explain the complex relationship between some abstract items because they sound definite. These processes elaborate the relationship between ideals and speaker's beliefs which can reach their aim of making the reasoning naturally and unconsciously accepted by the audience.

4.2.3 Functions of Existential Process

In can be seen from the Table 9 that existential processes only account for 6.4% of all the clauses. This number means that in president Trump's inaugural address, there are only a few existential processes. One possible reason may be that the over use of this process will give the audience a sense of monotone and hard to draw the focus of the audience. The following are some examples of existential processes in the address.

Example 27: There was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land.

Example 28: When you open your heart to patriotism, there is no room for prejudice.

Example 29: There should be no fear.

President Trump uses verbs there be in the above examples to show the current happenings and existings. In above examples, president Trump articulates the power of patriotism and national solidarity boldly. Through depicting the existence of the disorder of the situation like poverty and prejudice in the country, president Trump implies that actions should be taken at once and unity and patriotism should be emphasized.

4.2.4 Functions of Behavioral Process

From the Table 9, we can see that behavioral processes have an overall representation of 5.0%. It can be found that behavioral processes are not frequently employed in the inaugural address as they mainly describe the typical human physiological and psychological behavior like breathing, coughing, smiling and so on. Clearly, in an inaugural address the behavior of some entities is not the focus, therefore, there are not many behavioral processes in the inaugural address. Some examples are showing below:

Example 30: Everyone is listening to you now.

Example 31: And now we are looking only to the future.

Example 32: So to all Americans, in every city near and far, small and large, from mountain to mountain, and from ocean to ocean, hear these words.

President Trump uses listen, look, hear as behavioral processes, and you, future, words as behavior. It suggests that president Trump really concerns America, Americans, and its economic growth and employment issues.

4.2.5 Functions of Mental Process

Table 9 demonstrates that in president Trump's speech, there are altogether 5 mental processes which hold 3.6% in the whole system. The existence of mental process in president Trump's speech is actually he tells his people to see and feel what has happened in America on that day. That is why president Trump invites all the people who come to hear his speech to unite and makes America better. Below are some examples:

Example 33: Americans want great schools for their children, safe neighborhoods for their families, and good jobs for themselves.

Example 34: In America, we understand that a nation is only living as long as it is striving.

Example 35: We all enjoy the same glorious freedoms.

We know that president Trump faces with the challenges. His most important task is to carry out plans to renew the country. In order to propose smoothly his policies and let the people support the policies, the president should firstly make clear what he thinks about the policies and let the people understand his thoughts. What is more important is that he must try his best to unite people's thoughts as well as to let the country people have the same thoughts with him. Through transmitting his own cognition of the policies, the president tries to influence the audience's minds so that they will support his policies. From the examples, we can also discover that lihe Sensors in most of the mental processes are the plural form of the first personal pronoun "we", which shows that the president deliberately uses this expression to involve the audience into his stance. Hearing this, the audience will unconsciously accept the president' viewpoint and make themselves on the same side with the president, which is just what the president wants.

4.2.6 Functions of Verbal Process

According to the Table 9, the occurrence of verbal clauses is very insignificant, with 0.7%. Verbal process is a process of saying which encodes the mental operations by the physical actions of "saying", so it is intermediate between mental and material processes (Thompson 2008: 100). Verbal processes are usually realized by direct and indirect quotation. Direct quotation means that the speaker cites the words from prominent people in his text. Its aim is to enforce the credibility of his text by using reputation of prominent people. The only one direct quotation in president Trump's inaugural address is presented below.

Example 36: The Bible tells us: "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity."

President Trump cites these words from Bible to make his speech more reliable and consolidate his authoritative status.

5. Conclusion

This study has applied the transitivity system in analyzing American president Donald Trump's Inaugural Address. Some major findings of the study are summarized as follows.

All the six process types were found to have occurred in the address with quite different frequency. Material processes take up the largest proportion with 68.6% of all the clauses. Relational processes come a distant second with 15.7%. Existential, behavioral and mental clauses have an overall representation of 6.4%, 5.0% and 3.6% respectively. The occurrence of verbal clauses is very insignificant, with 0.7%.

Combined with the features of the distribution, the author illustrates the functions of six process types. Material processes are most frequently used to describe the bleak situation of the America and the actions that the new government will take, which shows the new president's determination and ambition. He also uses relational processes to lay out a new vision for America. Through existential processes, president Trump expounds the challenges of the country. Through behavioral processes, president Trump conveys his concern for America and American people. Mental processes show the attitudes of the president towards the situations and his belief, intention and plan for America's future development with the aims of influencing and convincing the audience.

All in all, through the transitivity analysis of president Trump's inaugural address, it can be found that president Trump's real purpose is to stabilize the whole Americans, establish a good president image and win more support and trust in the world.

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