THE MANIFESTATION OF IDEOLOGY IN LANGUAGE: A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS APPROACH TO OBAMA'S SPEECH

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Abstract

This research investigates the articulation of ideology through transitivity patterns in Obama's speech. It adopts the principles of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), especially transitivity system, as its theoretical and methodological underpinning. The objectives of this research are: 1) to identify the processes and participants of Obama's speech, 2) to reveal Obama's ideology reflected through the transitivity patterns. In doing so, the linguistics or textual aspects of the speech, when it is analyzed within its socio-political context, is crucial for revealing the ideology. Qualitative method was used as the main method to interpret the findings by taking into account the sociopolitical contexts of the findings. However, numbers were also used to describe the occurrence of the transitivity patterns. The data of this research were in the form of clauses within the context of Obama's speech. The source of the data was Obama's speech taken from https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov. The findings show that five types of Halliday's transitivity processes are identified in the speech. They are Material (140), Relational (49), Mental (23), Verbal (8), and Existential (6). The domination of material process in the speech implies that Obama construed the world more in terms of physical actions. The transitivity patterns can reveal several points in relation to Obama's ideology. First, material process is used to show what the terrorist has done to his people, his response to terrorism, and the actions he has taken to destroy them. Second, mental process is also used in the speech to show Obama's emotion, thought, and inclination. Last point, Relational process was used by Obama to create a sense of relativity and to make strong statements in relation to the topic of the speech.

Keywords: systemic functional linguistics, ideational meaning, transitivity system, ideology, Obama's speech

INTRODUCTION

People use language not only as medium to communicate but also as a way to express what they have in their minds. There is a construction of meaning when they produce language. It can be seen through the words and grammar they choose. Focusing on grammar when interpreting texts is important since grammar plays important aspect in describing and explaining language phenomena. Grammar is considered as a tool to determine the purpose of what somebody says. There are three types of grammar in English. They are formal, traditional, and functional grammar. Formal and traditional grammar focus on how a sentence is structured, whereas functional grammar focuses on how meanings of a text are realized.

When people communicate with others, they choose the grammar contextually so the recipients can understand the meanings of what they say. In order to interpret language in use and to portray how clauses contain potential information, there is a major system of grammatical choice called transitivity system.

Transitivity focuses on the analysis of a text on a clause level. It is used to analyze the whole text. Therefore, it can be used to

analyze all types of text including presidential speech. Presidential speech is seen as a strong reaction toward problem which happens in the country. It also represents people's thoughts toward a particular event since it is delivered by president who is known as the representative of the country. What the president says in his speech shows his perspective and an action he will take. Here, transitivity is used to analyze President Obama's speech in response to San Bernardio attack on December 2, 2015 and terrorism in general.

The employment of transitivity in this research is used to answer the objectives of the research: (1) to identify the types of process and participant; and (2) to analyze President Obama's ideology articulated through the transitivity patterns.

According to Eggins (2004:3), systemic functional linguistics focuses on how people use language and how language is structured for use. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014:30-31) point out that there are three functional components of language. They are ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The three are called metafunctions. In interpersonal metafunction, language enacts personal and social relationships in the society. On the other hand, textual function relates to the construction of a text. It creates the link between features of the text with elements in the context of situation. In ideational metafunction, language gives a theory of human experience.

This thesis focuses on the ideational function of language especially in the transitivity system. The theoretical framework of transitivity was established and developed by Halliday. In general, transitivity is about how meaning is represented in clause. Clauses represent events and process of various kinds, and transitivity aims to make clear how the action is performed, by whom and on what. Transitivity is the system found in the experiential meaning which belongs to the ideational function. There are three main points in transitivity: process, participants, and circumstances. Halliday (2004:171) states that there are six process types in transitivity. Three of them are the main process which are material, mental, and relational. The rests are behavioral, verbal, and existential process. The six processes have its own participants which work as the entities that do the action and the ones that receive the action.

Van Dijk in Deborah Schiffrin et al. (2001:354) states that ideology and language use belong to different levels of analysis. Ideology belongs to macro level, whereas language use belongs to micro level of the social order. Therefore, there needs a bridge to theoretically connect the gap between both levels. That is why the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis are used in this research.

Van Dijk in Kondowe (2014:174) gives the concept of ideology as set of beliefs, attitudes, and values which shape people's

perception and through which reality is construed and interpreted. Van Dijk (2006:729) defines ideology as the foundation of the social representations shared by a social group.

Systemic Functional Linguistics is referred to the context of situation which is a useful term to cover the things which are going on in the world outside the text that make the text what it is. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014:33) state that the context of situation is characterized by three parts: field, tenor, and mode.

a. Field refers to what is going on in the context. In SFL, it deals with ideational meaning.

b. Tenor refers to the participants in social action or who takes part in thesituation. It deals with interpersonal meaning in SFL.

c. Mode refers to the role played by language in realizing social action. It deals with textual meaning in SFL.

The three parts of context are applied in text by being realized semantically and grammatically in the text. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014:34) also say that language is used differently based on the combination of field, tenor, and mode.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was mainly qualitative in nature. Numbers were used only for descriptive purposes. The interpretation and explanation of the transitivity patterns become the ultimate goal of the qualitative method. The phenomena which were observed in this research were the process types, the participant functions, and the circumstantial elements. The data were mostly in the form of words. The data were analyzed contextually to draw the real facts without any hypothesis. The researcher collected the data, analyzed them, and drew conclusion without making a generalization. Vanderstoep and Johnson (2009:166) state that qualitative research focuses on the social and cultural construction of meaning.

In this research, the object was Obama's speech in December 6 2015 delivered from the oval office as the response to the San Bernardino attack and terrorism. Since this research applied qualitative approach, the data were in the form of clauses found in the context of paragraphs in the speech. The source of the data was the speech itself. The text of the speech had been taken from www.oabamawhitehouse.archives.gov, the official website of American President Barack Obama. The research instrument was the data sheet made by using Halliday's transitivity system consisting of six types of process.

According to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:179), trustworthiness can be gained by using triangulation. The term derives from surveying, which refers to the use of a series of triangles to map out an area. Meanwhile, triangulation needs to be

conducted to check the understanding and analysis which were conducted by the researcher. In this thesis, the triangulation was done by checking the data source, method, and theories employed in this research. To get dependability, the researcher asked for the expert's judgment and peer reviewers to confirm the research data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings show that five types of Halliday's transitivity processes are identified in the speech. They are Material (140), Relational (49), Mental (23), Verbal (8), and Existential (6).

1. Types of process and participant in Obama's speech

The processes, i.e., material, mental, relational, verbal, and existential, are discussed simultaneously with their accompanying participants.

a. Material Process

The material process is the process of doing or happening. It involves the physical actions in the real world. There is someone or something which does some actions to other entities. The participants in the material process are called actor, goal, recipient, client, and scope. Here is the example of the material process found in the speech.

Excerpt 1: The victims (Goal) **were** *brutally* **murdered** and **injured** (Material Process) by one of their coworkers and his wife (Actor)

There are two participants found on excerpt 1, "the victims" and "one of their coworkers and his wife". The verb "were murdered and injured" shows that there is material process on excerpt 1. Here, the actor is "one of their coworkers and his wife" because they are the ones who murdered and injured "the victims". The entity affected by the action performed by the actor, in this case "the victims", is called goal.

b. Mental Process

The mental process is the process of sensing. In the mental process, the verb cannot be substituted by "do" since it is the process of thinking, seeing, wanting, and feeling. There are four types of sensing. They are perceptive, cognitive, desiderative, and emotive. These four types share the same types of participant, namely senser and phenomenon. Here is the example of the mental process found in the speech.

Excerpt 2: who (family and friends) (Senser) **loved** (Mental Process) them (Goal) *deeply*

There is an emotive process found on excerpt 2 indicated by the verb "loved", thus it is a mental clause. It can be seen that there are two participants in the clause, "who (family and friends)" and "them". The first participant, "who (family and friends)", is considered as senser because that is the one who uses feeling to sense the other entity, "them". Because "them" is the one who is sensed by the senser, it is called phenomenon.

c. Relational Process

The relational process is the process where a relationship is established between two terms. It is the process of being and having. It is divided into two sub-types, attributive and identifying. Attributive has purpose to describe while identifying has the purpose to define. Attributive has a couple of participants, namely carrier and attribute. Identifying process has token and value as the participants.

Excerpt 3: so far, <u>we</u> (Carrier) **have** (Attributive Relational Process) <u>no</u> <u>evidence</u> (Attribute)

The example of the attributive relational process seen on excerpt 3 is the possessive type of attributive relational process. Here, the carrier is the possessor and the attribute is the possessed. The clause on excerpt 3 indicates that "no evidence" is the attribute ascribed to "we". Therefore, the clause means that "we", the carrier, possesses "no evidence", the attribute.

d. Verbal Process

The verbal process is the process between mental process and relational process. It represents the act of saying. It has four participants. They are sayer, target, verbiage, and receiver. The example of the verbal process is shown on excerpt 4.

Excerpt 4: <u>many Americans</u> (Sayer) **are asking** (Verbal Process)

Excerpt 4 is the example of the verbal process indicated by the verb "are asking". It can be seen that there is a single participant only on the clause on excerpt 4. "Many Americans" is considered as the sayer because that is the entity performing the verbal act, "are asking". "Asking" itself indicates that there is a semiosis verbal process.

e. Existential Process

The existential process lays between the relational process and the material process. It proves the state of being, existing, and happening. It has a single participant only called existent. Here is the example of the existential process on excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5: there **are** (Existential Process) <u>some…</u> (Existent)

Excerpt 5 is the example of the existential process indicated by "there" and verb "are". "There" is not a participant. Yet, it shows the feature of existence. The only participant is "some…." The clause represents the existence of "some…"

2. Obama's Ideology Articulated in the Speech

To reveal Obama's ideology, the researcher first of all focuses on the world-view that Obama represents. The central focus of the world-view is to construe the nature of 'enemy'. In political speech, the speaker tends to identify who is "enemy" and who is "friend". To know Obama's world-view, the researcher analyzed the transitivity patterns in Obama's speech. From the analysis of transitivity system, material process predominates the speech. Therefore, the categories of "enemy" and "friend" in

Obama's speech are defined through action, rather than what they think, see, feel, want, say, or what the attribute they have.

Since the speech is about terrorism in San Bernardino, the researcher categorizes the subjects into two parties, terrorists and Americans. The categorization is meant to see the actions they have taken. Then, it will be used to find out Obama's world-view because it can reveal which party is considered by Obama as "enemy" and which one is considered as "friend" by looking at the actions they have taken.

The comparison of the actions taken by the terrorists and the Americans shows that the actions taken by the terrorists are negative. Meanwhile, the actions taken by the Americans seem neutral or positive ones. The terrorists do the actions which threaten the existence of Americans. Yet, the Americans also do the action over the "enemy". The point here is that they react to what the terrorists have done. Obama as the representation of the Americans demonizes the terrorists and emphasizes the positive presentation of the Americans in his speech. Therefore, Obama sees the terrorists as "enemy" and he sees Americans as "friend". The choices of lexis used by Obama to show the "enemy" as the negative party and the "friend" as the positive party are affected by his ideology. It is safe to assume that Obama has anti-terrorism ideology. The further analysis of transitivity system in Obama's speech can reveal Obama's ideology. It is explained as follow.

a. Obama's Response and Reactions Towards America and Terrorism

Obama's response and reactions towards America and terrorism are revealed dominantly by the material process. It means that Obama construes the world more in terms of physical actions of the past and future. In the beginning of the speech, Obama uses material process to give a report about the victims of the tragedy in San Bernardino. The victims are the part of the "friend". He tells about how they are killed in the attack. He also uses material process to show the action he takes as the response to the attack. Moving from the "friend", he starts talking about the "enemy" by using material process. In the following excerpt there will be some material processes used by Obama in the introduction of the speech.

Excerpt 6: *On Wednesday*, <u>14 Americans</u> (Goal) **were killed** (Material Process)

Excerpt 6 is the first clause in Obama's speech. Obama starts the speech by using material process indicated by the verb *were killed.* By using the verb *were killed* in the material process on excerpt 6, Obama wants to convey message that there is something happened in San Bernardino. He wants to tell the audiences to pay attention to the loss America has. He wants the audiences to know the fact that the attack has caused the death of the 14 Americans. He wants to tell the

audiences that they are all the victims of the deathly attack in San Bernardino. Since Obama is the representation of America and the victims are also Americans, he categorizes them as the "friend" party.

Excerpt 6 shows that Obama uses passive voice to start his speech. He puts goal, *14 Americans,* in the subject position before the process. The beginning of the speech is an important part, instead of using active voice, he uses passive voice in order to emphasize the point of what he wants to say. In this case, he wants to say that there are 14 Americans killed. He wants the audiences to focus on it. Young and Fitzgerald (2006) state that there are two important reasons why speakers use passive voice instead of active voice. The first reason is that they want the audiences to focus on the goal and not the actor. The second reason is that they want to eliminate the actor. It proves that Obama stands for the Americans.

Not only does Obama use passive voice on his material clause, but he also does not mention the actor. He makes the choices based on his ideology that he shares in common with other Americans. The absence of actor in the material clause means that the speaker does not want to give power to the other party to do some action since material process is about action. The audiences are aware that there are terrorists who killed the 14 Americans. Yet, Obama does not want to say that America is overpowered by terrorists. He wants to tell the audiences that

America is still the one with power and ability to face the terrorists. As what the world knows, the USA is one of the most powerful countries.

Furthermore, Obama does not give any participant role to the terrorists because of the word-view that he represents. He identifies the terrorists as the "enemy", whereas he himself stands for the "friend" party. He could have said "*14 Americans were killed by terrorists*". Yet, he does not say it because it would give terrorists the actor role which would make them overpower the Americans since actor is the entity who does the action toward others. He wants to show where he stands by emphasizing what he says. He wants the listener to focus on the 14 Americans who is the goal of the material clause.

b. Obama's Attitudes Towards America and Terrorism

Obama's attitudes towards America and terrorism are revealed by the mental process, the process of sensing. There are four types of sensing: cognitive, desiderative, emotive, and perceptive. The mental process only has a couple of participants called phenomenon and senser. Obama uses 24 mental process in his speech. He uses this type of process to talk about what he feels, what he thinks, what he wants, and what he sees. When Obama uses mental process in the speech, he wants to gain audiences' attention and sympathy by showing them his feeling and thought. There is an example of the analysis of mental

process found in Obama speech that is shown on the following excerpt.

Excerpt 7: <u>who (family and friends)</u> (Senser) **loved** (Mental Process) <u>them</u> (Phenomenon) *deeply*

Excerpt 7 shows the mental clause in Obama's speech. It is identified by the verb *loved*. *Loved* is the verb used to express emotion. Therefore, excerpt 7 is the example of emotive mental process. The clause on excerpt 7 itself is the part of the sentence *they were taken from family and friends who loved them deeply*. It is clear that *who* on excerpt 7 refers to *family and friends*, whereas *them* refers to the victims. Obama uses the verb *loved* to show the feeling of the family and friends who lose their beloved ones in San Bernardio tragedy. He wants to make the audiences know that there are people who deeply love the victims. He shows the audiences that the attack in San Bernardio is not just about the dead victims but it is also about the sense of loss from people whose family and friends die because of the attack.

Obama wants to get audiences' sympathy by using mental process in his speech. He shows them what terrorists had done to Americans. Not only did they murder and injure the victims, but they also cut people's hearts especially the victims' family and friends. Obama uses the verb *loved* which is a strong word to show human's feeling. He also tries to show how strong the feeling is by adding the word *deeply* which means that

the family and friends really love the victims more than others could do. When people love others so strongly, they will get so much pain when they lose the ones they love. It seems that Obama wants to tell audiences about the pain they feel. Terrorist has caused such terrible loss which is what Obama tries to show the audiences. He tries to hit their mental states so they could feel the pain. Obama wants them to know that terrorists are the enemy they have to destroy in order to prevent them from losing the ones they really love.

c. Obama's Perceptions of America and Terrorism

Obama's perceptions of America and terrorism are seen on the relational process. The relational process is divided into two sub-types: attributive and relational. Attributive has the purpose to describe, whereas identifying has the purpose to define. The relational process is found in Obama's speech because it allows him to show a relationship between and among participants. There is an example of the relational process found in Obama's speech which is shown on the following excerpt.

Excerpt 8: moreover, <u>the vast majority of terrorist victims</u> (Carrier) *around the world* (Circ) **are** (Attributive Relational Process) <u>Muslim</u> (Attribute)

Excerpt 8 shows the example of attributive relational process found in Obama's speech. The clause is considered as the attributive one because of the relationship

between the carrier and attribute. The verb *are* proves that the clause is relational process. Obama uses the relational process in his speech to tell the audiences about the fact that the vast majority of terrorist victims are Muslim. This statement is surprising for some people. It could be hard to believe since people know that the terrorists are Muslim. It could trigger questions from the audiences whether Obama's statement is true. Young and Fitzgerald (2006) state that when the speaker uses relational process to make a statement, he presents the fact that cannot be argued with because of the use of *are* which makes it a strong statement. Therefore, Obama uses the construction of identifying relational process to present the fact he gets and to tell the audiences strongly that the vast majority of terrorist victims are Muslim is true. By using relational process, Obama wants to show the audiences how brutal terrorists are. They are known as Muslim and they even declare themselves as the heroes for the true Islam. Yet, they mostly kill others Muslim who are supposed to be their brothers and sisters. The people who should they love and protect. This fact makes Obama's statement stronger that terrorists has to be destroyed.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, the researcher draws the following conclusions.

1. There are five processes found in Obama's speech. They are material process (140), mental process (23), relational process (49) verbal verbal (8), and existential process (6). Each process carries relevant participants. The participants of material process are actor, recipient, goal, client, and scope. The participants of mental process are senser and phenomenon. The participants of relational process are carrier, attribute, token, and value. The participants of verbal process are sayer, target, and verbiage, whereas the participant of existential process is existent.

2. Obama's ideology can be seen from thelexical choices used in processes and the participant roles. Obama has anti-terrorism ideology. From the deeper analysis of the material, mental, relational, verbal, and existential processes, the researcher got more proofs of Obama's ideology.

Material process is used by Obama to show his response and reactions towards America and terrorism. He tells the audiences what the terrorists have done to the Americans, the deaths they have caused, the progress they have made, and the efforts Obama took to destroy them. Obama uses mental process to show his attitude towards America and terrorism. He uses it to tell the audiences about his thought and feeling. He also uses relational process to show his

perceptions of America and terrorism.

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