

A TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS OF DONALD J. TRUMP'S INAUGURATION SPEECH

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Abstract

This study mainly employs Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), particularly regarding transitivity. This research seeks to investigate the transitivity patterns and to discover the meaning through the sociopolitical context of Donald J. Trump's inauguration speech. The objectives of the research are: (1) to identify the processes, participants, and circumstances of the Speech and (2) to explain how the context constitutes meaning in the speech. The research method used in this research was descriptive qualitative method. The context of data in this research was Donald J. Trump's Inauguration Speech and his sociopolitical situation when the speech was conveyed, while the form of data was the clauses in the speech. The results of the research show that the process types found in the speech are material (63), relational (25), mental (19), verbal (4), behavioural (20), and existential (4). Each process type entails its own particular participants and varies in circumstances. In regard of the meanings in the speech, the transitivity patterns play a crucial role in constructing meaning. The dominant use of material processes in Donald J. Trump's inauguration speech implies that the meanings presented mostly point out that the participants as constituents performed physical and real changes and that they might have certain impacts toward other constituents. Relational process acts as the second major process, which means the meanings in the speech are presented by identifying or attributing certain issues or entities. The behavioral process occurs relatively often which means that the meanings presented in the speech are leaning in between material and mental process and produce psychological impacts.

Keywords: systemic functional grammar, transitivity, speech, inauguration

INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the most common use of language. People employs language to communicate through verbal or non-verbal communication in the form of spoken and written. In any form of communication, one particular feature considered as a device to determine the meaning behind any form of language is the grammar employed by the conveyor. Grammar mainly develops scramble of words into an entirely acceptable sentence which is logically constructed. Possessing a

grammar makes a particular language more comprehensible, albeit simultaneously make it more complex and intricate.

This research provides a distinguished system on the investigation of a speech through its structure and aims to discover the meaning concealed that was proposed by the speaker/writer. As Halliday (2014: 51) says "Until now, linguistics has been like physics before 1600: having little reliable data, and no clear sense of the relationship between observation and theory", this statement

suggests that most research in linguistics have no correlation between the theory and the real-life phenomenon which is being observed, therefore, this research offers a result which leads to the affiliation of the speech structure and the real-life event.

The researcher decided to use Donald J. Trump's Inauguration Speech as the object of the research due to several reasons. The first is due to the reason that inaugural speech is a defining and the most prominent moment for an elected president to present a new president-elect and to provide the first impression toward the people through organized speech which is displayed globally. Trump's inaugural speech is the first step for him to convey the highlight of how he would lead and govern United States of America. The second reason is the fact that Trump had been covered in major news not only in America, but also in the whole world. He is considered as a controversial president and had made many people go against his ideology because of things he says and his point of view toward certain sensitive matters which are rejected by various parties, and in addition to how the media see him as a villain character. The third reason is because Donald J. Trump, as the elected USA president is highly influential not only within his Country but in international scale. Considering the fact that USA is the superpower country, it can

be concluded that US President would be the most powerful person in the world which means that his statements is capable of changing the world's economics, policies, and also politics.

The Inaugural speech, among other speeches, was picked because of the tendencies or the character of inaugural speech itself. Inaugural speech tends to be scripted, which means that it is more likely for it to follow grammatical rules and to use formal language, and organized accordingly to convey hidden message that might influence the audience.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research belongs to descriptive qualitative research focusing on transitivity analysis to identify the processes, participants, and circumstances found in *Donald J. Trump's Inauguration Speech* and to explain how context constitutes meaning in *Donald J. Trump's Inauguration Speech*. Qualitative research, as suggested by O'Leary (2014), is the interpretation of phenomena based on how the people see them through the perspective and background knowledge they possess. Qualitative research pursues to explore the issues or the problems in the object into deeper understanding based on the theory applied. It can provide more inclusive interpretation than only test theories.

Halliday (2004) suggests that text is the form of data used for linguistic analysis and all of the description of grammar is based on text. Based on the description, the data that will be used is the text form of *Donald J. Trump's Inauguration Speech*. The text then distributed and broken down into clauses as the unit of analysis. There are 129 clauses discovered in *Donald J. Trump's Inauguration Speech*. The context of the data would be the current Sociopolitics trait of Donald J. Trump.

The researcher became the primary instrument as Moleong (2000:4) suggest that the researcher himself is the main research instrument in conducting a qualitative research. The secondary instrument is the data sheet of the observation on transitivity system in *Donald J. Trump's Inauguration Speech* and also any other instruments such as notebooks, pens, pencils, a computer set, etc to support doing the analysis. In this research, the researcher collected the data from the observation of the speech on youtube. After it is collected, the next step was classifying the data using a certain data sheet that the researcher had prepared.

The data collection of this research was acquired by taking notes during identifying the types of processes, participants, and circumstances found in *Donald J. Trump's Inauguration Speech*. The research procedures were watching the

speech on www.youtube.com, writing down the text of the speech, and identifying the transitivity system that is involved including identifying the process types, participants, and circumstances elements, then categorized them into the table.

According to Borton (1982), there are three steps to apply transitivity analysis. First, isolating the processes, and determining which participant (who or what) is doing each process; second, examining what sorts of processes they are, and which participant is engaged in which type of process; and last, verifying who or what is affected or seems to be affected by each of these processes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on 130 data, the result of the research, processes, participants, and circumstances, and sociopolitical context employed by Donald Trump are explained in this part. More explanation can be presented as follows.

a. Material Process

Table 4.2 shows that actor and goal are the most frequent take place participants, this is affected by the dominance of material process in the speech which commonly consist of actor and (or) goal as its participants.

	We will face challenges.	
We	will face	challenges
Actor	Material	Goal
	Process	

(Datum 3)

- (1) We will confront hardships,
we will confront hardships
 Actor Material Goal
 Process

(Datum 4)

- (2) but we will get the job done.
we will get the done
job
 Act Material Goal Circ:
 o Process quality
 r

(Datum 5)

Extracts (1), (2) and (3) shows that material process has a significant influence toward the accomplishment of delivering particular messages. These messages which delivered through the uses of material process made it possible for the audience to acquire certain ideologies unconsciously. However, the ideologies found in Trump’s inauguration speech is considered to be inconsistent. This issue can be caused by the Trump’s inconsistent political background. This inconsistency was presented by the fact that he was in the habit of moving from one party to another which eventually affecting Trump’s ideologies to have more variation.

The presence of these three clauses in his speech could be helping him to convince the audience that he is serious. This can also indicates that he has prepared himself to provide solutions through

actions and to produce tangible results. The participants *we* in these three clauses refer to Trump and the citizen of USA. It means that he was implicitly saying that he cannot execute all of these ideas by himself. Therefore, he needs the help of the citizen in order for these visions to flourish and be successful. The phrases *will face*, *will confront*, and *will get* indicating a physical activity of doing something which will be executed by the participants in the clauses. Three of the clauses have goal which means it belongs to transitive and can be probed by *what did x do to y?*, and the answer to this interrogative form of the clause structure is the clauses themselves.

b. Mental Process

January 20th, 2017 will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again.

- January will be as the day the*
20th, 2017 remembered people
became
the rulers of
this nation
again
 Phenomenon Mental Circ: Role
 Process (Guise)
 (Datum 29)

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

- The forgotten will be longer*
men and women forgotten
of our country no
 Phenomenon Mental Circ:
 Process extent

(Datum 30)

Extract (17) consists of *January 20th, 2017* as the phenomenon, which refers to the date in which Donald J. Trump's inauguration takes place, *will be remembered* as the process, and *as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again* as the circumstance of role. In this statement, Trump is trying to appeal toward the audiences' feeling and using mental process to deliver a sense of significance of the event. The phrase *will be remembered* is categorized as cognition in which the cognitive function of the audience is the major feature in play. Instead of using a phrase like *inauguration ceremony* or *today's event*, he choose the date because it will be more potent and gives an atmosphere of patriotism in the audience. The circumstance used to describe the process is equally impactful. Based on political point of view, it is based on conservatism which adopted by Republican Party. One characteristic of conservatism which mentioned in this clause is that a leader is nothing without his people. Donald J. Trump, in his speeches and interviews, always says that he will put aside the importance of the government and focusing more on the people. This ideology which adopted by Trump is one of the main reasons that he is elected as the president of the United State. The sense of patriotism is

what Trump trying to bring out through the utilization of mental process.

c. Behavioral Process

Together, we will determine the course of America and the world for many, many years to come.

<i>we</i>	<i>will</i>	<i>the course of</i>	<i>for</i>
	<i>deter</i>	<i>America and</i>	<i>many,</i>
	<i>mine</i>	<i>the world</i>	<i>many</i>
			<i>years</i>
			<i>to</i>
			<i>come</i>
Beh	Behav	Phenomenon	Circ:
aver	ioral		Extent
	Proce		
	ss		

(Datum 19)

The behavior *we* in this statement is used because it would not only include the audience that is present at the inauguration or those who voted for him, but for the whole American. This was necessary because it was not a campaign speech anymore. The purpose for the uses of the word *we* is for those who watch the inauguration through television were feeling more involved in the speech. The phrase *are now joined* is considered behavioral process because it involves both material and mental process. In physical or material sense the word *joined* refers to the activity of gathering and watching the inauguration. While in mental sense it refers to a meaning that the audiences are joined by their pride as an American. The mental process can be viewed as an indicator of how Trump's seriousness in taking pride as the president elect. The

process was then explained further by the circumstance of cause *as great national effort to rebuild our country and restore its promise for all of Americans*. This statement was based on Republican's most distinctive ideology which is conservatism which lead to the words *rebuild* and *restore*. What it meant by *rebuild* and *restore* was that the Republican Party wants to restore the traditional value of America which is fading away as the time passes.

d. Relational Process

and we are grateful to President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama for their gracious aid throughout this transition.

we are grateful to President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama for their gracious aid throughout this transition

Carrier	Relational Process	Attribute	Circumstance	Circumstance

(Datum 7)

They have been magnificent. Thank you.

They have been magnificent

Carrier	Relational Process	Attribute

(Datum 8)

Extract (27) shows a relational process which has a purpose to attribute the participant or carrier. The statement was intended to shows appreciation toward his predecessor and his family's presence in

the inauguration. This statement exist simply to provide an information about the attribute of *we*, which refers to Donald J. Trump, his family, and the whole new administration under his presidency, which is grateful and then explained further by the circumstances that follows.

These expressions of gratitude might be quite unexpected regarding the gravity of the situation. Donald J. Trump, in many of his campaign speeches and interviews, frequently attacked Obama and blame him for many issues that causing trouble for America. This statement shows that even if Obama and him might their disagreement, he still acknowledging Obama as the president of the USA before him and that Trump also has a good composure. Trump pretty much blame Obama and Democrats on anything, but the most significant issues are regarding: healthcare, immigration and foreign policy. He disagree toward Obamacare because of the huge amount of subsidies it takes from the government and he thinks that it is inefficient and it seems that he would like to replace as many policies as possible from the previous administration. He also disagree toward the immigration and foreign policy which considered to be too open for him, he urges the congress to restricting more people who are about to go to America in attempt to reduce terrorism act which currently a hot topic in America.

However, he specifically relate terrorism to Islam and this issue has been arousing many protest throughout his campaign.

there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land.

<i>there</i>	<i>was</i>	<i>little to</i>	<i>for</i>
		<i>celebrate</i>	<i>struggling</i>
			<i>families all</i>
			<i>across our</i>
			<i>land</i>
Existenti	Existenti		Circ: Cause
al			(Behalf)
Process			

(Datum 20)

Extract (30) was used because Trump intended to point out the existence of a certain object, in this case struggling families all across America. The context in this statement is regarding the fact that politicians are celebrated in many events, yet the people are suffering, hence there was little to celebrate. This statement is also triggered by the ideology of Republican Party which tend to conserve traditional value and leaning toward a more spread economics, even though they prefer capitalism which support the growth of big companies mainly. Trump always says that the people are more important than the government, he believes that Americans are suffering because their jobs are taken from them and their opportunity is slim due to the immigration and foreign policy that applied by the previous administration. There are approximately 6 million

unemployed in American at the time. This number is considered to be high. Trump argued that one of the reason of the vast amount of unemployed in America is because there are many illegal immigrants at the time. Some companies tend to employ illegal immigrant because of that they are cheaper to be employed, work more effectively, and there is no need to concern about their healthcare. In today economics spectrum, the unemployed would have to struggle to survive and acquire a decent living condition. There are also many homeless people in America who brought even more problems toward the administrations.

a. Verbal Process

The Bible tells us how good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity.

<i>The Bible</i>	<i>tells</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>how good</i>
			<i>and</i>
			<i>pleasant it</i>
			<i>is when</i>
			<i>God's</i>
			<i>people live</i>
			<i>together in</i>
			<i>unity</i>

Sayer	Verbal	Receiver	Verbiage
	Process		
			(Datum 98)

In Extract (32), the sayer is an inanimate object, which is the bible. The bible is used in this statement since the majority of American religion is Christianity and Catholic, therefore bible might be a

powerful source of information in which capable of altering or at least drawing the audience’s opinion. The verbiage is used in order to support Trump’s ideology which are patriotism and pride toward his country, this kind of statement might provide a significant boost and support indirectly toward Trump’s image, because the source of the support is considered to be in the highest order which is the bible.

We must speak our minds openly,

<i>We</i>	<i>Must</i>	<i>our</i>	<i>openly</i>
	<i>speak</i>	<i>minds</i>	
Sayer	Verbal	Verbiage	Circ:
r	Process	e	manner
	s		(quality)

(Datum 90)

Extract (33) provides an example, in which the information is not originated from different source and later derived to be formed into a new clause, but instead, this is an encouragement to be able to perform an activity of speaking our mind. The context of this statement is obviously refers to the basic foundation in USA itself, which is democracy. Trump wants to promote democracy as the foundation of thinking and to emphasize that people are able to convey any of their ideas which would help in maintaining government to function properly and capable of achieving prosperity in the future. Trump, in many of his speeches, was considered by many as a

tyrant or a dictator who would eliminate the democracy in America, however, this statement clearly suggests otherwise. Trump even often to be compared with Kim Jong Un and Adolf Hitler who are dictator. The circumstance *openly* which extending the meaning of the process clearly suggests a basic principle of democracy which strongly suggests that there would be no restriction toward what an individual can or cannot say.

Verbal process is used the least in the speech. The reason is because this process only be used to convey other’s opinions, while the main focus in this speech is to convey the president-elect’s opinion. However, this process can also provide support toward Trump’s arguments.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions below are drawn based on the findings and discussions of the research. Firstly, the speech consists of 130 clauses representing all the process types, i.e., material (63), relational (25), mental (19), verbal (4), behavioural (20), and existential (4). Meanwhile, the most dominant participant found in the speech automatically based on the process result is *actor* (52) which is the participant of material followed by *goal* (39) which also belongs to material process. In terms of participants, among 7 types of circumstance elements, there are only 6

types found in the speech, i.e., *location* (14), *manner* (21), *cause* (14), *extent* (14), *accompaniment* (9), *role* (1) and *matter* (2). The transitivity analysis provides an important keys in understanding Donald J. Trump's Speech through its transitivity patterns and sociopolitical context. Transitivity in this research makes it easier to analyze the ideologies which presented in the speech by focusing on the process which is used in delivering the ideologies. It is appear that the process used in delivering the speech was varied and categorized based on their functions. The dominant use of material processes in Donald J. Trump's inauguration speech implies that the meanings presented mostly point out that the participants as constituents performed physical and real changes and that they might have certain impacts toward other constituents. Relational process acts as the second major process, which means the meanings in the speech are presented by identifying or attributing certain issues or entities. The behavioral process occurs relatively often which means that the meanings presented in the speech are leaning in between material and mental process and produce psychological impacts.

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