

## Analysis of Transitivity System in Trump's Inaugural Address

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**Abstract:** On the basis of transitivity system, this paper attempts to analyze Trump's inaugural address. Based on quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis, this paper aims to divide the speech into six processes, material process, relational process, mental process, existential process, verbal process and behavioral process, and give examples under each process. It is concluded that no matter which process Trump used, the ideas he conveyed are similar. After analyzing the speech, readers can improve sensitivity when reading political studies.

**Keywords:** Transitivity; Inaugural address; Trump.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the view of Halliday, three metafunctions exist in systemic grammar. They are the ideational function, the interpersonal function and textual function [1]. The ideational function aims to convey new information to listeners and it includes experiential function and logical function. The interpersonal function is to express the speakers' status, identity, motivation, attitude and his reference, judgment and evaluation of things. The last textual function is to organize language components into discourse on the semantic level. The transitivity system in this paper belongs to ideational function. Its function is to divide what people see, hear and do in the real world into several processes and identify participants and circumstantial elements involved in various processes.

According to Halliday, people can divide human being's experience into six different process types through the transitivity system, which are material process, relational process, behavioral process, verbal process, mental process and existential process.

American presidential election always attracts attention from the whole world. In the presidential election in 2006, Trump became the 45<sup>th</sup> president. As the start of his new status, Trump's inaugural address is of great significance. In this paper, the author would analyze Trump's inaugural address from the perspective of transitivity system.

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars have studied Trump's inaugural addresses from various perspectives in the field of linguistic. Based on the theory of Systemic-Functional Grammar, Zhao Mengyan and Zhang Yi [1] did a research on Trump's inaugural addresses from transitivity. Ni Haixiang [2] and Liu Fengmei [3] studied it from Halliday's three metafunctions.

Ni Haixiang [3] asserted that the process which occupied the largest number was the material process while the active non-middle voice was the most voice used. Liu Fengmei [4] paid close attention Trump's speech style and found that Trump frequently applied the cohesive devices.

Others explored Trump's inaugural address by using metaphor, stylistic analysis and identity construction theory.

### 3. METHODS

The author used quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis. Firstly the former one was used to divide the inaugural address, made it clear about which process the sentence belonged to. The later one was used to analyze specific sentence under one process, talk about the meaning and deep implication of the sentence.

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## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this paper, the author would analyze Trump's inaugural address from two aspects, the distribution and the functions of the six transitivity processes.

### 4.1 Distribution of the Six Transitivity Process

Process	Number	Percentage
Material	108	61.4%
Mental	11	6.3%
Relational	39	22.2%
Behavioral	5	2.8%
Verbal	5	2.8%
Existential	8	4.5%
Total	176	100%

From the table above, readers can clearly see that there are 176 clauses in Trump's inaugural address. The material processes are the most frequently used and the number of them is 108, taking up 61.4 percent. The relational processes ranked the second among all the processes, whose number is 39 and accounts for 22.2 percent. The third place is taken by mental processes and the number is 11, occupying 6.3 percent. The existential processes follow the mental processes, ranking the fourth. The number is 8 and accounts for 4.5 percent. The number of verbal processes and behavioral processes are the same, each one is 5 and the percentage is 2.8 respectively.

### 4.2 Analysis of six transitivity system process

#### 4.2.1 Material process

Material process is a process of doing something. This process usually includes an actor, an action verb and the goal of the action. The actor is the logical subject of the sentence. The goal is the logical direct object. They are usually nouns or pronouns. If a material process has an actor and a goal of the action, this clause can be either active voice or passive voice. However, if the clause has an actor but no goal of the action, the clause will only have active voice.

In this paper, material process plays the functions of telling the people the purpose of gathering here, describing the current social problems of the United States, identifying the causes of the social problems above, putting forward the solutions to problem in society and planting a bright future for the American people. The author would take examples to carefully explain three of those functions.

Eg. (1) We, the citizens of American, are now joined in a great national effort to rebuild our country and restore its promise for all of our country.

Firstly, Trump used "rebuild" and "restore" to illustrate his tasks after being the president. They are rebuilding America and restoring promise for all people

in the country. As he could not do all things by himself, so he appealed to all Americans to do altogether, he called on all people to accomplish all tasks in a united way. At the beginning of the speech, Trump aimed to build support for himself by the dream of American that they want to revitalize the prosperity of their nation as well as the economic and cultural prosperity.

(2) Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities, rusted out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation, an education system flushed with cash but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of all knowledge. And the crime, and the gangs, and the drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential.

Negative words like "trap" "steal" "rob" reappear the ugly situations faced by America. Vulnerable groups like mothers and children are still in poverty, criminal organization and drugs are still threatening people's life safety. Trump emphasized the poverty and life safety that people most concerned. Although these words seem ordinary, they can stimulate the nerves of the audience sensitively. Trump aimed to rouse the ambition of people at ease, evoke the fighting will of Americans for reducing poverty, eliminating the drug and maintaining social stability. By this way, Trump also paved the way for his radical reform.

(3) We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies and destroying our jobs.

It shows that in the later days, Trump would make decisions that benefit all Americans, including the national tax, international trade, overseas immigrants, and diplomacy and so on. And by using the three negative words "making" "stealing" and "destroying", Trump aimed to condemn the strong impact on economic and people because of international trade, overseas immigrants and so on. From his words, many people can speculate that his object is China, condemning many Chinese workers find jobs in America, robbing their operating post. In his words, America's high unemployment and slow economic is caused by Chinese workers. It shows clearly that after being the president, he would adopt trade protection, even start a trade war for American's interests without obeying international trade rules. Here, his idea of "America First" shows obviously.

#### 4.2.2 Relational process

The relational process is the process that reflects the relationship between things, or it can be a process of being or becoming. The relational process has two types: attributive and identifying. The former one refers to which attribute an entity has or which type it belongs to. The latter one identifies two entities'

properties. Each of the two types can be divided into three types: intensive circumstantial and possessive [5].

In this paper, it plays the functions of expressing gratitude, identifying the significance of winning the election, uniting Americans and striving together, showing a negative attitude towards previous politicians and showing determination and goals.

(4) We are grateful to president Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, for their gracious aid throughout this transition. They have been magnificent.

Trump used relational process to thank for former president Obama and First Lady Michelle for their help in the transfer of power, but never thanked them for their service to the country. In fact, Trump's entire inaugural address was not friendly to politicians, pointing out many social injustices, where made former president Obama somewhat embarrassed at the scene. So people can see Obama's unhappy face when he heard these words.

(5) When America is united, America is totally unstoppable.

Trump encouraged ordinary people to fight for prosperity of the United States; he also affirmed the strength of American people. All they had to do was to unite, and with the fighting spirit of American people, the development of United States would certainly be unstoppable. This was also Trump's hope after he was in power, American people would work with him for a better future.

#### 4.2.3 Mental process

Mental process is a process of reaction, cognition and perception, which is relevant to mental activity. Two participants are involved in mental process, senser and phenomenon.

In this paper, mental process plays the functions of signifying the importance of Trump's winning, calling for the spirit of striving and making promise.

(6) You came by the tens of millions to become part of a historic movement, the likes of which the world has never seen before.

Trump said this was a big day that America has never seen before, and people was about to embark on the days of being the asters of their own country. The audience must feel inspired when they hear these words. By say that, Trump implied that it would be a great change in the whole country, gave all Americans hope, made all of them have confident on the future and obey all new policies.

#### 4.2.4 Existential Process

Existential process is a process of existing. There is an existent in every existential process. In this paper, existential process plays functions of revealing current social reality, stating the expectation of America and American and calling for action.

(7) This is your day. This is your celebration. And this, the United States of America, is your country.

By using three "this is", it not makes parallelism in from, but also lays the lays the progressive step by step in semantics. Trump aimed to strength that the presidential victory not belong to "myself", a family or a party, it is the victory of all Americans. It is the day that deserves every American to celebrate. Because "I" represent the interest of all people, not just the few. People would have the feeling that it is the same they support Trump as support themselves. This is just another way Trump aimed to win hearts and minds.

(8) At the center of this movement is a crucial conviction -- which a nation exist to serve its citizens. Trump emphasized that "a nation exist to serve its citizens" implying that the government led by him would be a government serving all people, the country led by him would be a country benefiting all people. By showing his ambition, Trump expected Americans can submit to the leadership of the new government and support them.

#### 4.2.5 Verbal process

Verbal process is a process of saying to exchange information. Sayer, verbiage and receiver are the main participants. The sayer is not necessarily a person. The common verbs used in verbal process are "tell" "talk" "speak" and so on.

In this paper, verbal process plays the functions of reflecting American values and the style of American politicians.

(9) The Bible tells us how good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity. We must speak our minds openly, debate our disagreement honestly but always pursue solidarity.

Trump quoted from the Bible to illustrate the importance of people's unity. The majority of the American people believe in god, so his words can be more persuasive. Besides, he mentioned the values that the American people have always cherished, such as freedom and honesty.

#### 4.2.6 Behavioral process

Behavioral process is a process of being behaving that has something to do with physiological activities. The common verbs used are "laugh" "cry"

“dream” and “cough”. Only one participant or behavior can be seen in this process, and the behavior is usually human being. In this paper, the behavioral process plays the functions of describing future and equality.

(10) But that is the past and now we are looking only to the future.

From Trump’s words, people could see Trump was depicting a bright future for American citizens after he became president. In his other words, he constituted a situation that the United States would be the focus of the world, the voice of American would be heard by everyone, they must dare to dream, and their dreams must be big enough. What they needed to do was just to look to the future. What a beautiful picture! American people were definitely looking forward to it.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the transitivity system, the author analyzed Trump’s inaugural address and examples were given under each process. The most often used process by him is material process, relational process ranks second.

While no matter which process is used, the ideas Trump wanted to convey are similar. They are mainly about firstly it is an irresistible trend for “me” to become the president, and by using words like “we” “our”, he close the gap between himself and the audience. Secondly, Americans also needed to join in the process of rebuilding and restoring their country, they needed to be unity, to fight for Chinese workers, international trade, overseas immigrants and so on. Thirdly, the new government would try best to serve people from all classes. And America would have a bright future under their leadership. Fourthly, he ignored the achievement made by Obama, stressed himself and his government all the way.

From this paper, it proves the maneuverability and practicability of transitivity system in inaugural address. People can find the deepen meaning, political end and ideology of Trump by analyzing his speech. This is a way to improve readers’ sensitivity when reading political studies.

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## APPENDIX

We will face challenges. We will confront hardships. But we will get the job done. Every four years, we gather on these steps to carry out the orderly and peaceful transfer of power.

And we are grateful to President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama for their gracious aid throughout this transition. They have been magnificent. Thank you.

Today’s ceremony, however, has very special meaning. Because today, we are not merely transferring power from one administration to another or from one party to another.

But we are transferring power from Washington D.C. and giving it back to you, the people. For too long, a small group in our nation’s capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost. Washington flourished, but the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered, but the jobs left. And the factories closed.

The establishment protected itself but not the citizens of our country. Their victories have not been your victories. Their triumphs have not been your triumphs. And while they celebrated in our nation’s capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across o, 200ur land. That all changes starting right here and right now. Because this moment is your moment. It belongs to you.

It belongs to everyone gathered here today and everyone watching all across America. This is your day. This is your celebration. And this, the United States of America, is your country.

What truly matters is not which party controls our government but whether our government is controlled by the people. January 20th, 2017 will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again.

The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer. Everyone is listening to you now. You came by the tens of millions to become part



of a historic movement, the likes of which the world has never seen before.

At the center of this movement is a crucial conviction -- that a nation exist to serve its citizens. Americans want great schools for their children, safe neighborhoods for their families and good jobs for themselves.

These are just and reasonable demands of righteous people and a righteous public. But for too many of our citizens, a different reality exist. Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities, rusted out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation, an education system flushed with cash but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of all knowledge. And the crime, and the gangs, and the drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential. This American carnage stops right here and stops right now.

We are one nation, and their pain is our pain. Their dreams are our dreams, and their success will be our success. We share one heart, one home and one glorious destiny. The oath of office I take today is an oath of allegiance to all Americans. For many decades, we've enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry, subsidized the armies of other countries while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military.

We defended other nation's borders while refusing to defend our own. And spent trillions and trillions of dollars overseas while America's infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay.

We've made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country has dissipated over the horizon. One by one, the factories shuttered and left our shores with not even a thought about the millions and millions of American workers that were left behind.

The wealth of our middle class has been ripped from their homes and then redistributed all across the world.

But that is the past and now we are looking only to the future. We assembled here today are issuing a new decree to be heard in every city, in every foreign capital and in every hall of power. From this day forward, a new vision will govern our land. From this day forward, it's going to be only America first -- America first.

Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs will be made to benefit American workers and American families. We must

protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies and destroying our jobs.

Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength. I will fight for you with every breath in my body. And I will never, ever let you down.

America will start winning again, winning like never before. We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth, and we will bring back our dreams. We will build new roads and highways and bridges and airports and tunnels and railways all across our wonderful nation. We will get our people off of welfare and back to work rebuilding our country with American hands and American labor. We will follow two simple rules -- buy American and hire American.

We will seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world. But we do so with the understanding that it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first. We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone but rather to let it shine as an example. We will shine for everyone to follow.

We will reinforce old alliances and form new ones. And unite the civilized world against radical Islamic terrorism, which we will eradicate completely from the face of the earth.

At the bedrock of our politics will be a total allegiance to the United States of America and through our loyalty to our country, we will rediscover our loyalty to each other. When you open your heart to patriotism, there is no room for prejudice.

The Bible tells us how good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity. We must speak our minds openly, debate our disagreement honestly but always pursue solidarity. When America is united, America is totally unstoppable.

There should be no fear. We are protected, and we will always be protected. And most importantly, We will be protected by the great men and women of our military and law enforcement. We will be protected by God.

Finally, we must think big and dream even bigger. In America, we understand that a nation is only living as long as it is striving. We will no longer accept politicians who are all talk and no action, constantly complaining but never doing anything about it.

The time for empty talk is over. Now arrives the hour of action. Do not allow anyone to tell you that it cannot be done. No challenge can match the heart and fight and spirit of America. We will not fail. Our

country will thrive and prosper again. We stand at the birth of a new millennium, ready to unlock the mysteries of space, to free the earth from the miseries of disease and to harness the energies, industries and technologies of tomorrow. A new national pride will stir ourselves, lift our sights and heal our divisions. Its time to remember that old wisdom our soldiers will never forget -- that whether we are black or brown or white, we all bleed the same red blood of patriots.

We all enjoyed the same glorious freedoms, and we all salute the same great American flag. And whether a child is born in the urban sprawl of Detroit or the windswept plains of Nebraska, They look up at the same night sky, they build a heart with the same dreams

and they are infused with the breath of life by the same Almighty Creator.

So to all Americans in every city near and far, small and large, from mountain to mountain, from ocean to ocean, hear these words -- you will never be ignored again.

Your voice, your hopes and your dreams will define our American destiny. Together, and your courage and goodness and love will forever guide us along the way. We will make America strong again. We will make America wealthy again. We will make America proud again. We will make America safe again. And yes, together, thank you. We will make America great again. God bless you. And God bless America. Thank You.