

SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS OF POLITICAL ARTICLES IN EASTERN AND WESTERN ONLINE NEWS

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Abstract

Purpose of study: Political discourse causes a large attendance, due to their influence on economic, cultural and societal. The current study investigates 80 political articles in Eastern and Western online news by applied transitivity analysis under the systemic functional study by ([Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014](#)).

Methodology: The study employs qualitative analysis the systemic functional linguistics with Critical discourse analysis to find out the answers for the next two questions: First, How the transitivity process recognizes the experiential meaning in the social actor's discourse in the Western and Eastern online news? Second, what are the differences or similarities in the social actor's discourse in Eastern and Western online news? The documentation method uses to collect data from the two online newspapers, from Eastern (*Al JAZEERA*) and from Western news (*THE GUARDIAN*) from 6th December 2017 to 13th May 2018.

Main Findings: The main findings show that verbal processes, is most predominant in social actors discourse in Eastern especially Turkish's president mostly used the processes and in Western France president mostly used transitivity processes in online news and followed by relational, and mental.

Implications/Applications: On the basis of the study, can be better to understand the thinking manner and cultural features and the attitudes and judgments of the political in East and West.

Originality/Novelty of Study: Many Researchers like [Naz, Alvi, and Baseer \(2012\)](#), [Farhat \(2016\)](#) and [Xiaowan \(2018\)](#) utilized transitivity processes to study political discourse. The researcher can't find any study employs Transitivity processes to investigate the political articles in Eastern and Western online news consider Trump's decision after declared Jerusalem as Israel capital on 6th December 2017.

Keywords: Political discourse, Transitivity analysis, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Eastern and Western online news, Al Jazeera and The Guardian.

INTRODUCTION

Based on the last decades of politics, all politicians try to deliver their constituents via logical and emotional reason in order to influence the people, especially during the election period. Specifically, the affective reactions of political speech are based on the words delivered to the audience such as Love or death or hate. "Political leaders of such demeanor succeed to transform their ideas into definite shapes. Language is an opposite medium, apt trajectory and launching pad for them to air their clandestine political notions" (Gill And Azhar, 2018).

The rise of language is along with the construction and growth of humanity, language is correlative to the humanity. According to ([Halliday, 1967](#)), language is used to express the peoples' experience and serve a variety of different functions. Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics shows how language is used and sheds light on the three meta-functions of language: the ideational function is related to the representation of reality; the interpersonal function, is concerned with establishing and maintaining the interaction between the hearer and speaker; and the textual function, is considered with representation of ideational and interpersonal meanings as text. The three metafunctions are raising three strands of meaning in the clause:

1. The clause as representation, 2. The clause as an exchange, and 3. The clause as a message (Wang, 2008, p. 58). Why the researcher chooses the "functional" grammar because the study is based on the meaning and interpretation of linguistic forms. ([Halliday, 2000:41](#)) holds that "the aim has been to construct a grammar for purposes of text analysis: one that would make it possible to say sensible and useful things about any text, spoken or written, in modern English." This enables one to show how, and why, the text means what it does. Halliday employed transitivity analysis on the different type of text and he has analyzed the *Inheritors* written by William Golding from the perspective of transitivity, in 1971. The transitivity system is represented through six processes: the material process, the mental process, the relational process, the behavioural process, the verbal process, and the existential process. Many scholars have used the transitivity system to provide a qualitative analysis of discourses. They have gotten a profound interpretation of their data. Recently, the researchers have been using the transitivity system in literary works and news texts.

However, the researcher studied the political articles in Eastern and Western online news through transitivity analysis. The discourse of the articles is quite different from other types of text, when the social actors construct their discourse, in order to achieve the goals of their political aspiration. The social actors have used the advantage of the transitivity in order to reflect their ideology in society. The present study can be posed its problem in terms of interpretation the emotional response to Trump's declaration of Jerusalem as Israel capital by applied transitivity analysis. Specifically, through a qualitative study, this paper tries to find the answer for two questions: First, How transitivity process recognizes the experiential meaning in the social actors discourse in the Western and Eastern online newspapers? Second, what are the differences or similarities in the discourse of social actors in Eastern and Western online newspapers? This paper shifts from the meaning level to the expression level.

Previous Studies of Transitivity Analysis in Discourse Analysis

The term "discourse analysis" first proposed by (Harris, 1995). Many linguists have defined the discourse as "unit beyond the sentence" like (Stubbs, 1983, Chafe, 2003). To pragmatics, (Schiffrin, 1994) defines the discourse as "utterance". While the functional linguists are defined the discourse as "discourse is the use of language" (Fasold, 1990:65) (Shayegh, 2012) investigated seven of Obama's speeches by utilized transitivity analysis via systemic functional linguistics. The results show that the material processes predominately on Obama speeches. (Ong'onda, 2016) applied transitivity theory to analyze the headlines of the newspaper on terrorism in Kenya. The study aims to explain how the headlines of newspapers portrayed Al-Shabaab attacks at Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya. The study concluded that material and relational processes, most predominately the headlines of the newspaper.

(Zhang, 2017) studied the first television debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump by applying the transitivity system within systemic functional linguistics. The quantitative analysis of this study concluded that material processes, relational process, and mental processes are most predominant in both politicians' discourses. (Zhu and Li, 2018) analyzed the American President Donald Trump's Inaugural Address. They concluded that the material process is the most commonly used. The relational process and the mental process take the second and the third respectively. (Nadiah et al, 2018) utilized Transitivity analysis to study the reporting of the airstrike event launched by Malaysian security forces on March 5, 2013, during the intrusion of "Sulu Sultan" followers in Lahad Datu. The results showed that the Mental Processes and Material Processes most dominant.

Theoretical Framework: Systemic-Functional Approach and Transitivity Analysis

Our analysis also includes a study of Transitivity processes within Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014) stated that SFL is "construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types. Each process type provides its own model or schema for construing a particular domain of experience as a figure of a particular kind" In addition, they described the transitivity system as "the lexico Baghdad University grammatical resources for construing a quantum of change in the flow of events as a figure as a configuration of elements centered on a process."

The dataset contained 63,040 words from four online newspapers, and these data are analyzed using tools from a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), 'Transitivity'. The researcher downloads the texts and then copies and past into a widely available word processing software package. They are divided into clauses and identify.

Transitivity in Theory

There are six processes of transitivity system: Material, Mental and Verbal processes as major and Relational, Behavioral and Existential as a minor process. These processes have the participants, which serve different roles in the clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 213-223). The researchers also classified the clause process based on Halliday's classified, as (Eggins, 2004), (Thompson, 2004), and (Fontaine, 2013). The participants in the clause play specific functions.

Material Process "considered of events and actions and consist of an actor the doer of the action and the goal" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The Mental process is based on sense. The Mental process is divide into Senser who is (like, hate, remember) and Phenomenon the thing being sensed. The person, fact or particular object can be the phenomenon can be (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The mental process considers about Perception Processes ('seeing'), Cognition Processes ('thinking'), Desiderative Processes ('wanting') and Emotive Processes ('loving').

The relational processes are based on characterizing or identify (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The relational process is realized in clauses by 'being' and 'having'. There are verbs involved in the Relational process: verbs 'be' and the verbs of possession such as: have, own, and possess. Relational processes have two types: Attributive (Hassan is wise) and Identifying (Hassan is a leader) Examples from (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p.265). The Relational attributive process does not identify the situation or case but describes it. In other words, it attributes to some entity (Bloor & Bloor, 2004, p. 121). There are two Participants in the Attributive Relational Carrier and Attribute. In some cases Attributive process shows to serve possession or

ownership so is known as a Possessive process. In this case, the participants are the Possessor and the possessed ([Bloor & Bloor, 2014](#)).

The verbal process realizes by the verbs such as (say, tell, speak, criticize, explain, repeat and declare). The verbal process is related to three participants: Sayer, Verbiage, and Target ([Thompson, 2004](#)). [Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014](#) stated the “physiological and psychological behavior, like breathing, coughing, smiling, dreaming and staring can be called a Behavioural process”. Behavioural processes divided into two participants: Behaver and Range, and the function like scope participant in the material process.

The existential process is represented by existence or happening in the clauses. The existential process is realized by (there is or there are) in the clauses (Fontaine, 2013). “The existential process has one participant is called existent and represents the thing existed” ([Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004](#)).

Transitivity Analysis

The process type for each clause was identified according to the (Presidents) in Eastern and Western in online newspapers that identified according to the Transitivity processes. (e.g. Sayer or verbiage in verbal process, Actor or Goal in material process, Sensor or Phenomenon in the mental process). As a result of an iterative process of analyzing the data according to process type and identifying relevant presidents and list them. The list of presidents was put into a separate spreadsheet according to the data (*Al-Jazeera and The Guardian*), newspapers to produce graphs representing the distribution of grammatical roles for each social group. The occurrences or frequencies of the social actor in the different grammatical roles (e.g. as the Verbal, Material, Mental, Relational, Existential and Behavioral) was analyzed and converted into percentages for the four online newspapers. For example, what is the number and % of instances in AL Jazeera the president used Verbal process? What is the number and % of instances in The Guardian newspaper the president used Material process? By comparing these findings, we can see the patterns in a representation of groups across the discourse of each.

RESULTS OF DISCUSSION

Al Jazeera (AJ), an alternative online newspaper, represented Eastern presidents in Transitivity analysis as shown in the graph and charts in Figure 1.

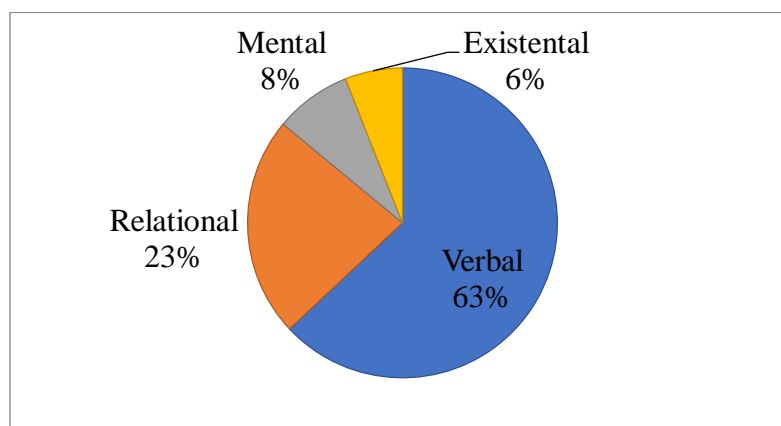


Figure 1: The Eastern presidents represented the Transitivity analysis in Al Jazeera newspaper

Al-Jazeera online news, represented Eastern presidents used verbal process most frequently as well, which takes up 63%, then comes the relational process 23%, then the mental process 8%, and existential process 6% as in figure 1. Below table 13 represent Eastern presidents used Transitivity processes.

As can be seen in Table 1 Turkish’s president mostly used transitivity processes than another especially Verbal process in order to express their rejection for Trump’s decision. It can be attributed to using of Verbal process which makes the relationship between Erdogan and his audiences closer and president Erdogan as a friendly person and makes him more reliable and convincing in their points of view in regard to Trump’s declaration.

The reason which was mentioned above can be noted in study [Yuqiong and Fengjie \(2018\)](#) where Transitivity analysis to investigate David Cameron’s speech in retaining Scotland.

On the other hand (AJ), an alternative online newspaper, represent Western presidents used Transitivity analysis as shown in Figure 2.

Table 1: Represents the Eastern presidents used Transitivity processes in AJ.

Eastern Leaders	Sayer	Actor	Carrier	Senser	Existent	Behavior	Total	Percentage
1-Turkish	23						23	41%
2-Palestine	11						11	20%
3-Saudi	10						10	18%
4-Jordan	7						7	13%
5-Indonesia	2		1				3	6%
6.Lebanon	1						1	2%

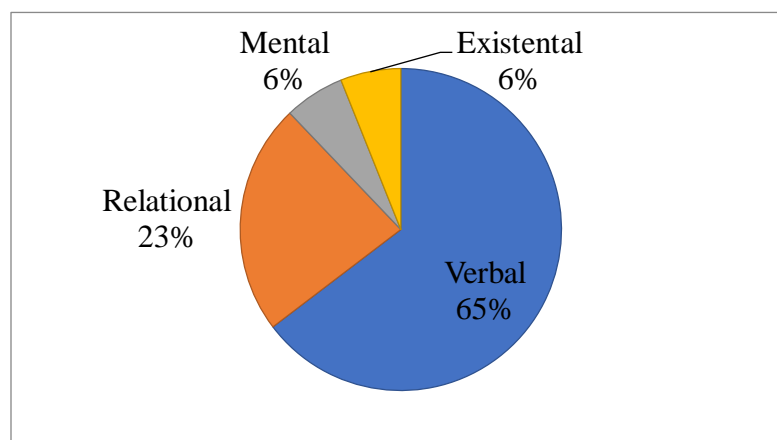


Figure 2: Western presidents used Transitivity analysis

As can be seen in figure 2 *Al-Jazeera* online news, also represented Western presidents used verbal process most frequently as well, with 65%, then comes the relational process 23%, then the mental process and existential process both 6% as in figure 2. Below table 14 represent Western presidents used Transitivity processes.

As can be seen in Table 2 France's president mostly used Transitivity especially Verbal processes in order to persuade the audience, showed his authority, and reliability of his discourse regarded Trump's decision. By the same token, a study by [Zheng, Yang & Ge \(2014\)](#) utilized transitivity analysis to study the article of English-medium medical, they concluded the verbal process was highest process to prove the authority, reliability, and persuasiveness of the medical RAs.

Table 2: Represents Western president used Transitivity processes in AJ

Western Leaders	Sayer	Actor	Carrier	Senser	Existent	Behavior	Total	Percentage
1-France	4	2	2				8	35%
2-Paraguay	8						8	30%
3- Israel	5						5	22%
4- UN	2						2	8%

The articles in *The Guardian* online news the Eastern presidents used transitivity process in their discourses, as shown in figure 3 below.

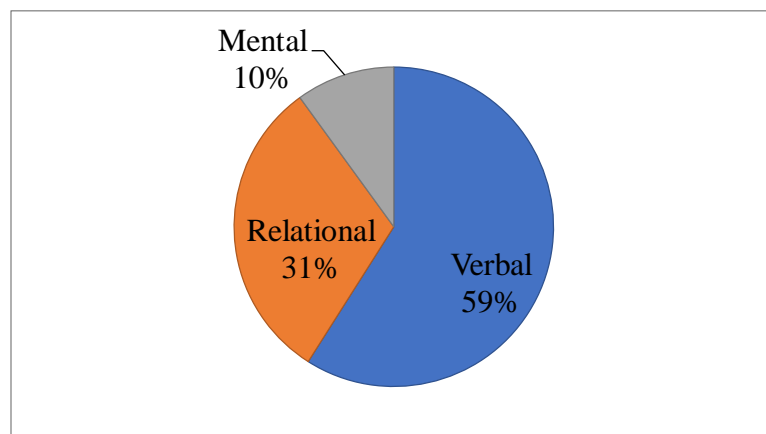


Figure 3: The Eastern presidents represent used the Transitivity analysis in The Guardian

In Figure 3 the Eastern presidents in TG are represented most used verbal processes occupy most frequently, in their discourse which takes up 59%, followed by relational process 31%, and the last mental process which takes up 10%. Below Eastern presidents and the Transitivity processes used in *The Guardian* newspaper as in table 3.

Table 3: Eastern presidents and the Transitivity processes used in The Guardian newspaper

News	Category	Participants						Total	Percentage
		Sayer	Actor	Carrier	Senser	Existent	Behavior		
TG	Eastern Leaders								
1-	Turkish	18	11		1			30	45%
2-	Palestine	10	4	1				15	23%
3-	Jordan	2	2	1				5	8%
4-	Egypt	2						2	3%
5-	Lebanon	2	1					3	4%
6-	Syria	2						2	3%
7-	Saudi	2	1	1	1			5	8%
8-	Emirates	1						1	1%
9-	Iraq	1						1	1%
10-	Qatar	1						1	1%
11-	Kuwait	1						1	1%
12-	Iran	1	1					2	3%

Similar results were obtained about the Turkish president in The Guardian and Al Jazeera newspaper based on the transitivity processes. Highest use of the verbal process when expressing rejection to show the authority and the power of Turkish., as [Idrus, Nor b, & Ismail \(2014\)](#) also used transitivity system to investigate the Malaysian and Singaporean oral proceedings over Batu Puteh Island Issue, and they concluded that verbal process was as highest process than other processes to indicate that verbal processes by Malaysia could reflect to the power and the position of Malaysia. In addition, Turkey would absolutely refuse the misshapen bargain, which can be briefed in few words, that it is the bargain of going easy with the Zionists, the bargain of selling Palestine, Jerusalem and Al-Aqsaa Mosque, the bargain of selling an oppressed and tyrannical people, the bargain of selling honor, dignity and gallantry, the bargain of leaving Islam and faith ([Takeen, 2019](#)).

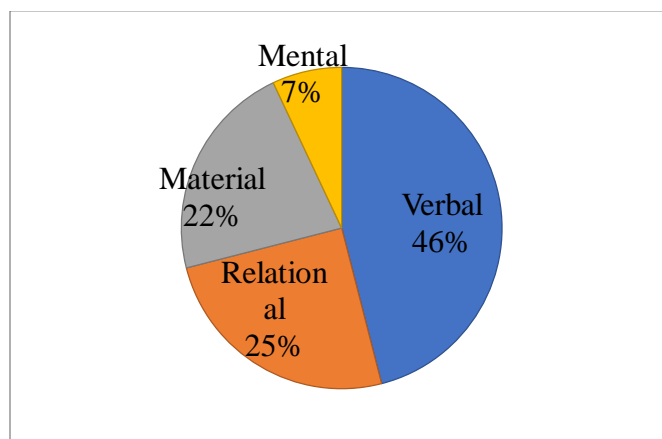


Figure 4: TG newspaper also represents Western presidents used Transitivity processes.

In Figure 4 the Western presidents in TG are represented most used verbal processes also occupy most frequently, in their discourse which takes up 46%, followed by relational process 325%, and the last mental process which takes up 22%. Below the Western presidents and the Transitivity processes used in The Guardian newspaper as in table 4.

Table 4: the Western presidents used Transitivity processes in The Guardian newspaper.

News	Category	Participants						Total	
TG		Sayer	Actor	Carrier	Senser	Existent	Behavior		
Western	leaders								
1-	French	9	2	3				14	51%
2-	UN	2	1		1			4	15%
3-	Russia	1	1					2	7%
4-	Italy	1						1	4%
5-	Czech	1						1	4%
6-	Guatemala	1	1					2	7%
7-	Paraguay	2		1				3	12%

Similar results in Al Jazeera were obtained about France's president mostly used Verbal processes to emphasize his obligations and capture the attention of the world. In addition, one of the oldest church in the world is in Jerusalem. EU Christians started pilgrimages to Jerusalem in the 1st century A.D. from around 1099 to 1187 ([Di and Mayot 2017](#)).

The study of political articles in online newspapers discovers that verbal process is mostly utilized in the discourse of presidents. Especially Turkish and France presidents used the verbal process to express their instances regarded Trump's announcement Jerusalem as Israel's capital on 6th December 2017 in online newspapers. For instance,

Al Jazeera news: 111 Lebanese president says Trump decision threatens stability, Trump decision threatens stability.

Al Jazeera news: 1 Trump undermining stability with Jerusalem move Germany's Schulz.

The Guardian: 4 Erdogan, Macron will urge the US to reverse Jerusalem decision.

Al- Jazeera News: 3 World leaders chastise the US over Jerusalem 'escalation'.

The Guardian News: 496 Twenty-two of the 28 EU countries voted for the resolution, including the UK and France and Germany. The analysis further discovers that the social actors utilize the relational process to attribute and identification clauses in their discourse, they employ the relational process to elaborate their reaction consider Trump's speech after declares the Jerusalem as Israel capital on 6th December 2017. For instance:

Al- Jazeera News: 241 The Turkish presidents has been highly vocal in criticizing the US administration over its Jerusalem decision.

The Guardian: 72 "I'm convinced that it is impossible to ease tension with a unilateral solution,"

The Similarities and differences

There are similarities in the discourse of Eastern and Western social actors in both newspapers *Al Jazeera* and *The Guardian*, the social actors especially Turkish President Erdogan and French President Emmanuel Macron, mostly used Verbal processes. In addition, they rejected Trump's decision for religion, economic and political reasons were used in expressing rejection of Trump's decision.

CONCLUSION

The present study investigates 80 political articles in two of Eastern and Western online newspapers by applied the transitivity system with SFL. The qualitative analysis proves that the transitivity theory in systemic functional linguistics is an effective method in political articles. The study concludes that the verbal processes and relational process are most frequently processes, in the discourse of the social actors. Meanwhile, mental process, existential process, and behavioral process are seldom utilized. The political articles are the typical political discourse with specific political aims. The study also concluded Turkish and French presidents mostly used verbal processes, compared to other processes, in their discourse to reject Trump's announcement.

The use of the Verbal process made the relationship between social actors and their audience closer. It would appear as if they were friends and created a more convincing discourse on their points of view towards Trump's declaration.

So most of the presidents in Eastern and Western online newspapers have used transitivity process, especially verbal process to express their reject or criticize, Trump's decision when declaration the Jerusalem as Israel capital on 6th December 2017. The analysis also discovers that some of the social actors are used transitivity processes to elaborate their agreement with Trump's decision like Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Togo, and the United States. The analysis also finds there are similarities between the presidents opinion in the Eastern and western online newspapers, that most of them rejected the Trump's declaration the Jerusalem as Israel capital on 6th December 2017 and except some countries agree with Trump's decision like; Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, Marshall, Nauru Islands, Micronesia, Palau, and Togo. Through the transitivity analysis of the discourse of the political articles in Eastern and Western online newspaper, the study concludes that most presidents reject Trump's move and less of them agree with him.

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