

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **Critical Analysis of Transitivity in the Inaugural Speech of Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya of Gombe State**

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#### **Abstract**

This study examines the distribution of transitivity process found in the inaugural speech of Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya of Gombe State. The study explores deep social significance via transitivity analysis of the ideational function and transitivity processes found in the inaugural speech as highlighted by Systemic Functional Grammar. The paper adopts Ideational Metafunction of Systemic Functional Grammar as its underpinning framework to weigh and conduct a transitivity analysis of the inaugural speech. The paper uses qualitative method, the corpus-based speech is sourced from the repository of Gombe State Government House and internet. The findings of the study show that material, mental, relational and verbal process are found in the speech. The study also reveals that material process is the most frequently process.

Relational, mental and verbal process take the second, third and fourth places respectively. Existential and behavioral have zero occurrence in the speech. Material process is strongly used to lament the poor economic situation of the State. To gain the confidence of the audience and looking forward to a better future, Governor Yahaya applies different processes, especially relational and mental process. This shows his different attitudes and subjective emotions toward the people of Gombe State.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Transitivity, Inaugural Speech, Ideational Function, Verbal Process.

## **Introduction**

This paper explores the linguistic perspectives manifested in Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar theoretical framework, when it is applied to political discourse. Specifically, it examines the use of M.A.K. Halliday's model to analyse Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya's inaugural speech. The study focuses on identifying the processes of transitivity system specifically ideational metafunction within the speech and highlights the linguistic choices made according to Halliday's framework.

Effective communication is a fundamental skill for academic success and personal development (Adamu et.al 2024). This paper aims at providing a stylistic analysis of transitivity in the inaugural speech of Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya of Gombe State, thereby adopting Systemic Functional Grammar model for analysis, mirroring ideational metafunction. It is pertinent to understand and note the importance of language we use to convey

our feelings and emotion in that clarity and precision is what makes communication effective.

The role of language in politics cannot be over-emphasised. Language and politics have become intertwined to the extent that language is an indispensable tool in politics. Agbogun (2011) observes this and opines that "language is used in dealing with issues within the political terrain; such language now becomes political language". Also Schaffner (2004) submits that:

"In linguistics and literature, political language has been used either to denote the use of language in the context of politics, that is, a specific language use with the purpose of achieving a politically motivated function, or it has been used to denote the political vocabulary; words and phrases that refer to extra-linguistic phenomenon in the domain of politics. "

Thus, the use of language in politics is for unique purposes and functions. Numerous functions performed by language in the field of politics have drawn the attention of several scholars in recent times. Perhaps, this is the reason Beard (2002) avers that looking at the language of politics as an occupation is important because it helps us to understand how language is used by those who wish to gain power, those who wish to exercise power and those who wish to keep power. The essence of power in the governance and affairs of people can never be swept under the carpet; this makes people in control of power to be the subject of attraction and they are as important as the language used by them.

A speech is a force or a power that is used to accomplish different ends or goals in different circumstances. It is important to understand the purposes or goals of the communicator and the circumstances under which the communication is taking place (Medhurst, 2010). The goal of a given speech can be determined through its communicative function, which is rendered through the kind of speech acts performed (Trosborg, 2000), as speech acts constitute the verbal actions accomplished with utterances (Yule, 2002).

An inaugural speech, like other types of political speeches, is an important opportunity for a politician to address the public. Unlike an acceptance speech, campaign and protest speeches may be delivered at party meetings, conventions, campaign rallies and press conferences. A political inaugural speech is a public speech usually delivered after an electoral victory at the swearing-in ceremony of an elected political office holder. It is often delivered in an atmosphere of celebration and usually geared towards motivating, mobilising, educating, informing and entertaining the audience. Such occasions present records of programme outlines and promises made by a newly elected political office holder on assumption of office. It usually affords a speaker the opportunity to appreciate his/her supporters and the public for their support while presenting his/her programmes and stating how to realise them.

Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya is the first APC governor in the history of Gombe State. His inaugural speech was delivered on 29th May, 2019. It is expected that the speech will differ from those of the previous PDP governors in theme and language use.

This study is motivated by the dearth of scholarly works on the inaugural speech of Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya. Halliday is a renowned scholar to consider adopting SFG on a text, 'Inheritors' written by William Golding from the perspective of transitivity which is the first application of Systematic Functional Grammar to analyse a text. Afterward, many other scholars have also adopted Systematic Function Grammar to analyse political speeches. These scholars include Wang Fang Kong Jing, Liu Ming and Ola et al. (1994). They have examined the pragmatic functions of language use in political speeches of Presidents and Heads of Government. However, little attention has been given to speeches of other political office holders such as State Governors and Local government Chairmen. Huang Guowen studies six English versions of the Chinese poem “Qingming” by using Interpersonal Function theory. He mainly focuses on the characters in the poem.

The common feature of the above studies is that they concentrate on one aspect of their meta-functions and they hardly have any theoretical innovations. However, a very few scholars have studied a piece of political speech from ideational function. Thus, adopting Halliday's Ideational metafunction of Systemic Functional Grammar Approach to investigate and analyse the distribution of six transitivity process types obtainable in the text in the 2019 inaugural address of Governor Muhammad Inuwa Yahaya of Gombe State is what make this research unique.

## **Literature Review**

Transitivity is a semantic concept that examines how meanings are represented in the clause. By this definition, transitivity in SFG is process-oriented system

to encode and decode the experience and knowledge of human beings through lexico-grammar (Halliday, 1994). Clauses are analysed for their potentials to represent both inner and outer world of human beings. Filho (2004) notes that "transitivity expresses what is happening, what is being done, what is felt and what state it is." Turl (1975) affirms that transitivity specifies different types of processes that are recognised in language and structured by what they express.

### **Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis is a linguistic category that many linguists are interested in. Even though there are many explanations, its main functions and characteristics are clarified as to describe and explore the structural mechanisms that the writer/speaker handles when speaking; focus on knowledge of language beyond the range of words, phrases, clauses and sentences necessary for successful communication; analyse the function of language and how it governs conceptions and perceptions, how it distributes power to those with lesser power; study linguistic expressions and pay attention to the relationship between language and socio-cultural context; aim to learn how language expresses different ways of visioning and understanding the world, .... (Brown & Yule, 1983; Nunan, 1993). Since 1970s of the 20th century when discourse analysis was divided into many narrow disciplines, the basic purpose of CDA is to understand the social issues expressed in discourse as well as to analyse the relationships between thoughts, attitudes, ideologies and how they are expressed through language, as evidenced, initiated and developed by linguists such as Kress, G. & Hodge, B (1979), Fairclough (1989), Fowler (1991), van Dijk (1995) and Wodak (2012). With the viewpoint that discourse is a social practice and its reflection at the same time, CDA uses Systematic Functional

Grammar to analyse and clarify the linguistic structures in texts, on the basis of the three superfunctions of language namely as the conceptual function (the speaker's experience), the interpersonal function (the social relations of the speaker and the listener) and the text-generating function (discourse structure).

In order to analyse discourse, especially through critical discourse analysis, many researchers opine that Halliday's Systematic Functional Grammar should be applied. Halliday (1994) argues that functional grammar can be applied to many sub-disciplines of Applied Linguistics. Two of those sub-disciplines are DA and CDA. According to him, "discourse analysis without being based on Grammar cannot be called analysis" (Halliday, 1994). Thompson (1996) argues that functional grammar has the advantage that it is convenient for analysing different aspects of discourse such as the text structure of the press, the way of citations in scientific reports, etc. Nguyen Hoa (2006) and Diep Quang Ban (2009) consider SFG as an important linguistic tool for Critical Discourse Analysis. Nguyen Hoa (2006) explains that CDA emphasises the symbolic nature of discourse, only then can CDA ensures linguistic features and the different ones from literary criticism (2005). Prior to that, Critical linguistics initiated by Fowler was also based on Systemic Functional Grammar theory. Explaining this issue, according to Nguyen Hoa (2005), the basic reason is that SFG has a linguistic perspective similar to CDA as well as critical social sciences, "the applicability of SFG theory in CDA is accepted because SFG is essentially a systematic grammar, recognising language as a resource for creating meaning, and the use of language is the choice of resources." (2003).

### **The Metafunctions**

The term metafunction originates in systemic functional linguistics and is considered to be a property of all languages. According to Halliday (1994), language mainly serves three primary functions which are termed as metafunctions. (a) Language is used to convey new information, to communicate the content that is unknown to the hearer. This function is known as the ideational function. (b) The interpersonal function embodies all uses of language to express social and personal relations. This includes the various ways the speakers enter a speech situation and perform a speech act. (c) The textual function refers to the fact that language has mechanism to make any stretch of spoken or written discourse into a coherent and unified text and make a living passage different from a random list of sentences. According to Halliday, a clause is the simultaneous realization of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings. This paper focuses on the ideational Metafunction for the transitivity analysis of governor Muhammad Inuwa Yahay's inaugural speech.

### **Ideational Function: Constructing Reality**

The ideational function is key to understanding how political actors represent and construct reality. This involves analysing:

i. **Processes:** Political texts often involve action or process verbs that indicate how events or actions are framed. For example, a political leader might describe an economic crisis as a “challenge” (neutral) or a “disaster” (negative), thereby framing the event in a way that influences public perception.

- **Material Processes (actions/events):** Who is doing what? (“The government will impose new taxes.”).

- **Mental processes (cognition/emotion):** What do participants think or feel? (“The president believes the country can recover.”).
- **Relational processes (identification/attribution):** How are the participants identified? (“The opposition is the enemy of progress.”).

ii. **Participants:** SFG helps identify which actors are involved in processes and how they are categorised. Political texts may marginalise or elevate certain groups through language choices, e.g. calling refugees “illegal immigrants” versus “asylum seekers.”

iii. **Circumstances:** These provide additional context such as time, place and condition. Political texts may employ specific circumstances to justify or manipulate actions e.g., "in times of crisis" or "in the face of terrorism."

### **Interpersonal Function: Negotiating Relationships**

This kind of function implies how political discourse shapes relationships between speakers and audiences, influencing attitudes and power dynamics.

This involves:

- **Mood:** The mood of a sentence can express the speaker’s stance and authority. Declarative moods may be used to assert authority, while interrogative moods can evoke participation or challenge. For example:
  - a. Declarative: “We will increase national security measures.”
  - b. Interrogative: “Do you really want to risk our safety by rejecting this policy?”

- **Modality:** Modality reflects the speaker's certainty, possibility or obligation. Politicians use modality to frame their proposals as necessary or open to debate or to indicate their commitment to actions.
  - a. **High modality:** “We must act now to prevent economic collapse.”
  - b. **Low modality:** “We might consider reducing taxes in the future.”
- **Pronouns:** The use of pronouns like "we," "you," and "they" can construct group identities, align the speaker with the audience or establish us-versus-them dynamics. For instance, a politician might say, “We, the people, demand change” to create solidarity with their audience or “They [the opposition] are out of touch with reality” to create division.

### **Textual Function: Organising Information**

The textual function is concerned with how information is structured and presented, and how the discourse is made coherent and persuasive. This involves:

- **Theme and Rheme:** SFG emphasizes the theme (what the sentence is about) and rheme (what is being said about the theme). In political texts, the theme often carries ideological weight, influencing what is prioritized in the discourse.
  - a. For example, in a speech, a politician may start with the theme of national security to make it the focus of the discussion, followed by a rheme that emphasises the urgency of the threat.

- **Cohesion:** The use of cohesive devices (e.g., conjunctions, reference, substitution) links ideas and arguments. Politicians often use cohesive ties to create logical connections between their arguments and guide the reasoning of the audience. For instance, "Because of our strong leadership, the economy is recovering."
- **Genre and Register:** Political texts often conform to particular genres and registers that evoke authority and legitimacy. Such implies speeches that are structured to appeal to emotions of the audience or manifestos that employ formal, technical language to convey expertise.

### **Theoretical Thrust**

This study adopts Systemic Functional Grammar as the underpinning approach to guide the interpretation of the data, looking at its social role. Systemic Functional Grammar is a theory that studies the creation of meaning through selection of lexical-grammatical systems in specific socio-cultural situations. Based on the basic philosophy of language to create meaning, M.A.K Halliday (1985) developed Systemic Functional Grammar with the analysis of language based on three functions (ideational function, interpersonal function, and textual function). According to many researchers, the biggest advantage of functional grammar over traditional grammar is that it reflects the social and dynamic aspects of language, places language in specific social contexts, and emphasizes the communicative function of language. For Halliday, grammar is seen as a system, not a rule. He believes that language is a potential for meaning. He assimilates meaning with function and uses syntax as a base unit to explain language function. According to Halliday, the functional organization of

language determines the form and principles of grammar. He affirms that language is a means of communication and must perform the three functions (so-called super-functions). The use of SFG within political texts makes it possible to provide insightful interpretation of the underlying ideologies, relations of power as well as the techniques of persuasion that can be found in the political discourse. Language and its functional roles are critical in the work of Systemic Functional Grammar theory where meaning of texts emerges from the convergence of three forces of meaning: ideational, interpersonal and textual. Such metafunctions enhance the understanding of how language is effectively constructed in relation to society in terms of social structures, identities and power relations, hence making SFG ideal for political discourse. Political texts (speeches, manifestos or policies and media reports) are quite often designed in such a way as to manipulate and control readers' persuasion strategies. In political discourse, SFG can help address the issue of language and how it is exercised in establishing authority, legitimating power and constructing certain discursive fields. This theory is relevant and suitable in the conduct of transitivity analysis of Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya's Inaugural Speech.

### **Methodological Considerations**

This paper adopts qualitative design; the corpus-based speech is sourced from the repository of Gombe State Government House and internet. Twelve (12) extracts relating to the study are sampled using secondary source of data from the internet and repository channel of Gombe State Government House. The data are grouped into four: material, mental, relational and verbal processes. The data are described based on the theoretical tenets of the Systemic

Functional Grammar. Each identified clause is described based on the meaningful information as it relates to the parameter. It is also interpreted to reflect the core values of such parameter. As such, the inaugural speech was downloaded and compared with what was obtained from the Government House to assess its credibility and genuineness as presented by governor. The text contains 119 clauses and Halliday's selection method is applied to select the samples among the clauses to reflect what was required for the analysis.

### **Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussions**

This section presents the data that were culled from the speech and interpreted them based on the ideational metafunction through material, relational, mental and verbal processes that are found to have occurred in the inaugural speech.

#### **Material Process**

It involves using words that expresses the notion of some entity in doing something to some other entity. Application of this type of process indicates that the speaker is intentionally hoping the listeners to react. It expresses the notion that some entity does something, which may be done to some other entity. Material processes appear most frequently in governor Yahaya inaugural address. For example: “We shall formulate policies.”

‘*We*’ is the actor ‘*shall formulate*’ is the process, while ‘*policies*’ is the goal. The pronoun ‘*we*’ demonstrates collective effort between the speaker and the listeners, all are known to be actors in this regards, so there is no any material process without an actor, even though names are not mentioned in the clause, the effort is collective. ‘*Policies*’ here serves as the Goal because it affects the participants. As seen above, material process may not necessarily be concrete as

seen in this example: *'our administration will tackle the perennial shortage of water'*; *'our administration'* is not a concrete or physical event that can be seen or touched. It is totally abstract. When compared with the first example: *'we shall formulate policies'*, the word *'we'* is a concrete thing that can be pointed out. Another example is: *'we shall seize the opportunity...'*, all are concrete happening or doing (i.e.) from actor which will be processed to a goal. However, the actor in material process can also be animate or inanimate as seen in *'our administration'* as an inanimate (non-human), while *'we'* is animate (human). *'Our administration'* is an actor towards the goal of *'water shortage'* which happens to be non-human via the material process. The actor *'we'* is characteristically human towards the goal of *'policies'* or *'the opportunity'* through the material process.

Another good example found in the inaugural speech is: *"...we are still battling with lack of portable drinking water, inadequate medical care, epileptic power supply, dysfunctional educational system and total failure of governance thereby leaving the citizens to fend for themselves."*

It is expected that the listeners or audience must react to this expression, which was intentionally created by the speaker with the hope that the listeners will likely make some comments. This reveals a game of blame that most politicians do when presenting any political discourse. It also generates a lot of tension from the public and usually the politicians give hope at the end. For example: *"... let us look beyond the pain and hardship we all endured. Together we shall move our State to the next level"*.

## **Mental process**

It involves phenomena described as the state of mind or psychological events. It expresses affection, cognition and perception. In governor Yahaya's inaugural address, mental processes largely distributes to have the confidence of the audience. This can be seen from the examples below:

- (1)... Gombe State wants your commitment.
- (2).... We know of all the atrocities committed.
- (3)..... Finally, we must think big and dream even bigger.

The examples above express and describe psychological events. For instance, "... *Gombe State wants your commitment*" expresses perception of the speaker that relates the state of the speaker's mind. He (the speaker) believes that with the support of people, many things will be achieved. This insinuates that his exceptional effort alone cannot be suffice, joining hands together will definitely yield positive results.

Also, the governor narrates yet another psychological event in: "..... *We know of all the atrocities committed.*" and "..... *Finally, we must think big and dream even bigger.*" These clauses express cognition where the governor reveal what he thinks or knows to the atrocities committed by the previous administration and at the end advises the listeners to think wisely as better days are coming with his administration. So, these expressions positively connote the influence of his mental process resulted to the psychological events which emanated from the inaugural speech, as the listeners can only judge his expressions when they deeply think and weigh the expressions in question in order to have hope and confidence in his administration. What is externally surfacing with words are not what is internally in the mind of the audience. With such expressions, many

thoughts will be going on in the mind of the listeners such as what commitment is required of them?; what are the atrocities?; what are those bigger things?. Here, mental process of sensing, psychological event and phenomenon will be going on in the mind of the listener.

### **Relational Process**

There is a related category of existential clauses. In relational clause, there are two parts to the being, something is being said to be something else. In other words, a relationship is being set up between two separate entities. In this process, we have Carrier/Identifier, then process as relational and Attribute Identifier. Consider the following sentences:

- i. Together we shall move our State to the next level.
- ii. We shall harness our resources for our people.
- iii. We did not give up our belief in Allah

From the sentences above, every carrier must relate with category of existential entity in the clause, where carrier as '*together we*' or '*we*' is process relationally as in '*shall move*', '*shall harness*' or '*did not give up*' to attribute/identifier as in '*our State to the next level*', '*our resources for our people*' or '*our belief in Allah*' (i.e.) something must be said to be something else, once it is not said, nothing will exist. These clauses demonstrate the relational quality in governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya's speech, in becoming committed and dedicated to uplift Gombe to a greater height with the support of the people. Such expressions demonstrate how enthusiastic the governor is concerning his people and his willingness to serve them. Early in his inaugural address, he makes it crystal clear that they are all burdened as the State is mismanaged by the previous administration. By this clauses, the expressions clearly point out to the

listeners how opposition party became the enemy of the progress of the State and hence, should not be recognised.

### **Verbal Process**

This covers any kind of symbolic exchange of meaning. This process is intermediate between mental and material processes. The central verbal process is easily recognised in that it is related to transfer of message through language. One participant in any verbal process is the Sayer -- the person who speaks though sometimes need not be explicitly mentioned. The governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya's speech exhibited such process. Note these examples:

i. We must speak our mind.

ii. We are unmindful of our promises to the good people of Gombe State

On the verbal process from the inaugural speech of Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya, there are symbolic exchanges where material and mental processes meet. The sayer "we" stand to represent the speaker and the committed citizens (inclusive) who are not clearly mentioned, the reference are the participants, where 'must speak' and 'are mindful of our promises to' stand to be a meaningful symbolic exchange (verbal process). SFG helps identify which actors are involved in processes and how they are categorised. Political texts may marginalise or elevate certain groups through language choices. So, this speech will not be an exception as Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya's speech exhibits such.

## **Findings and Contributions to the body of Knowledge**

Based on the analysis above, the research reveals that only four processes types were found to have occurred in governor Yahaya's Inaugural Speech, where material process happens to be the most frequent process used in the speech. It is also revealed that material and relational processes are the best options for their political aim because they seem to be more objective than other processes.

The present study contributes immensely to the field of Discourse Analysis (DA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It is also relevant in enlightening academic colleagues and students the interconnections of sociocultural phenomenon of SGF into the area of discourse analysis and the relevance of political text/discourse in application of the Systemic Functional Grammar. Also, the research contributes in harnessing the difficulty many students encounter in understanding the application of transitivity features independently.

## **Implication of the study**

By applying Systemic Functional Grammar in Critical Discourse Analysis of political texts, analysts can gain deeper insights into how political language is used to shape ideologies, construct social realities and maintain or challenge power. The three meta-functions of SFG offer a detailed approach to dissecting the nuanced ways in which political actors use language to persuade, manipulate and control public perception and political outcomes. Through this lens, CDA exposes the hidden agenda and ideological forces operating within political discourse, ultimately fostering a more critical understanding of political communication.

## Conclusion

The paper applies ideational metafunction of Systemic Functional Grammar to investigate and analyse transitivity system in the inaugural speech of Governor Yahaya of Gombe State, Nigeria. The analysis reveals that transitivity system in SFG is an effective model in encoding and decoding political speeches. This study also prepares the mind of young scholars to see the relevance of SGF in the analysis of language. It is observed by this study that not all componential features of the SGF will appear to be present when it comes to language analysis; some may be present while some can be absent.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A:

#### Extracts from Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya's (2019) Inaugural Address

##### Material Process

"...we are still battling with lack of portable drinking water, inadequate medical care, epileptic power supply, dysfunctional educational system and total failure of governance thereby leaving the citizens to fend for themselves."

"...let us look beyond the pain and hardship we all endured. Together we shall move our state to the next level"

"...We have enormous human and material resources that could be harnessed for the benefit of our people."

"Our administration will tackle the perennial shortage of water."

"We shall seize the opportunity."

##### Mental Process

.... Gombe state wants your commitment.

..... We know of all the atrocities committed.

..... Finally, we must think big and dream even bigger.

## Relational Process

“...Let us look beyond the pain and hardship we all endured.”

“...Together we shall move our state to the next level.”

## Verbal Process

We must speak our mind.

We are unmindful of our promises to the good people of Gombe State

## Appendix B

### Material Process

<u>Actor</u>	<u>Process</u>	<u>Goal</u>
We	shall formulate	policies
Our administration	will tackle	the perennial shortage of water
We	shall seize	the opportunity

### Mental Process

<u>Senser</u>	<u>Process: mental</u>	<u>Phenomenon</u>
I will	like to assure	everyone not to accept them.
Gombe state	wants	your commitment.
We	know	of all the atrocities committed.
Our people	have learnt	their lessons.

## Relational Process

**Carrier/Identified      Process: relational      Attribute/Identifier**

Together we                      shall move                      our state to the next level.

We                                  shall harness                      our resources for our people.

We                                  did not give up                      our belief in Allah.

## Verbal Process

**Sayer                      Process: verbal                      Receiver**

We must speak our mind. We are unmindful of our promises to the good people of Gombe State