Language, Function, Cognition

Week 3: Transitivity and Construal Analysis

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Modulo 6 bis, 311

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Topic 1: Transitivity Analysis in SFL

1. Transitivity Analysis

1.1 Processes, Participants and Circumstances

- One of the functions of a clause is to represent experience: to describe the events and states of the real (and unreal) world.
- In the SFL model, a representation of experience consists of:
  1. Processes: what kind of event/state is being described.
  2. Participants: the entities involved in the process, e.g., Actor, Sayer, Senser, etc.
  3. Circumstances: specifying the when, where, why and how of the process.

The dog	bit	the postman	yesterday
participant	process	participant	circumstance

1. Transitivity Analysis

1.2 Types of Process

SFL typically recognises 4 main types of processes:

- **Material** ('doing'): *kick, run, paint, repair, send*, burn, …
- **Mental** ('experiencing' or 'sensing'): *see, hear, know, like*
- **Verbal** ('saying'): say, tell, warn, argue, ask, …
- **Relational** ('being' or 'becoming'): *be, have, become, …*

Sometime also recognised:
- **Behavioural** (*laugh, talk, cry, breath)*,
- **Existential** ('exist'. "there is…")

1. Transitivity Analysis

1.3 Material processes and their participants

Material Processes: physical actions in the real world.

<u>Participants</u>:
- **Actor**: the one who does the action
- **Goal**: The one who is affected by the action
- **Recipient**: the one who receives something
- **Beneficiary**: the one for whom something is done

John	drove	Mary	home
Actor	Process	Goal	Circ: destination

Mary	was driven	home	by John
Goal	Process	Circ: destination	Actor

John	gave	Mary	a book
Actor	Process	Recipient	Goal

John	built	Mary	a house
Actor	Process	Beneficiary	Goal

1. Transitivity Analysis

1.4 Mental processes and their participants

Mental Processes: processes of perception, cognition, affection
- **Senser**: the one who does the mental action
- **Phenomenon**: The thing that is perceived, thought, appreciated

Perception:

John	saw	Mary
Senser	Process	Phenomenon

Cognition:

John	thought	that Mary was coming
Senser	Process	Phenomenon

Emotion:

Mary	liked	what he liked
Senser	Process	Phenomenon

That he was tall	pleased	Mary
Phenomenon	Process	Senser

1. Transitivity Analysis

1.5 Verbal processes and their participants

Verbal Processes: processes of communication:
- **Sayer:** the one who communicates
- **Addressee:** the one recieving the message
- **Verbiage:** What they say

John	said	that he was tired
Sayer	Process	Verbiage

John	told	Mary	to go
Sayer	Process	Addressee	Verbiage

John	was told	to go	by Mary
Addressee	Process	Verbiage	Sayer

1. Transitivity Analysis

1.6 Relational processes and their participants

Relational Processes: expressing possession, equivalence, attributes...
- **Carrier:** An entity being described
- **Attribute:** The description of the entity

John	is	tall
Carrier	Process	Attribute

- **Possessor:** the one owning or containing something
- **Possessed:** the thing owned or contained.

John	owns	a Mercedes
Possessor	Process	Possession

- **Token:** an entity being equated with another
- **Value:** the other description.

John	is	the president
Token	Process	Value

1. Transitivity Analysis

1.7 Some hints

Some rules:

1. Verbal and mental process must either have a clausal complement (the projection):

    - *I say <u>to go</u> / I told him <u>that he was wrong</u>*
    - *I felt <u>that he should go</u> / I like <u>swimming in the sea</u>*

    … or if no clausal projection, thew verb must allow one:

    – *I said <u>something</u> / I told him <u>a story</u>*

2. Perceptual verbs with a non-conscious agent are not mental, but closer to relational (assigning an attribute):

    – *The table feels smooth*
    – *Something smells burnt*
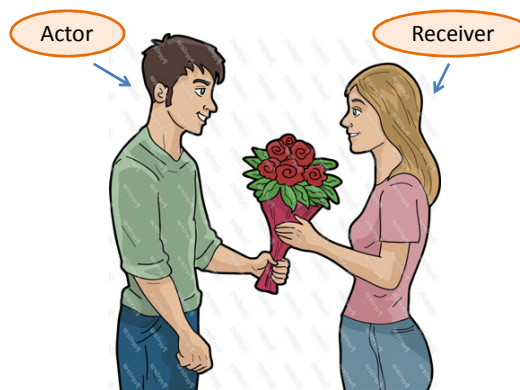
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1. Transitivity Analysis

1.8 Circumstances

- **Circumstances:** any kind of contingent fact or subsidiary situation which is associated with the process or the main situation

    – *The museum is <u>round the corner</u>*

    – *Do it <u>gently</u>.*

    – *He watered the garden <u>with a hose</u>*

    – *I left <u>because I was tired.</u>*

Type	Subtype	PROBE	EXAMPLE
Location	spatial	where?	in the corner
	temporal	when?	yesterday
Extent	spatial	how far?	3 miles
	temporal	how long?	since 1983, for 3 weeks
Origin		where from?	from London
Destination		where to?	to Sydney
Manner		how?	quickly, smoothly, by car
Cause	reason	why?	because she was tired
	purpose	for what reason?	to open the lid
	behalf	who for?	for your children
Contingency	condition	under what conditions	(I will will) if you let me
	concession	despite what?	(I won) despite my handicap
Accompaniment		with who/what?	(he went) with me
Role		what as?	(he went) as a fish
Matter		what about?	(we talked) about love

Based on: Droga and Humphrey2002 *Getting Started with Functional Grammar, p16*

Topic 2: Construal Analysis

2. Construal Analysis

2.1 Introduction

- **Construal Analysis** explores the pattern of transitivity roles that the writer assigns to particular participants in the text (or classes of participants).

Example:

> President George W. Bush on Saturday defended his $US350 billion ($A533.94 billion) tax cut package against opposition accusations that it unfairly benefits the rich.
>
> Bush, who is launching into a re-election campaign, insisted in his weekly radio address that the package, narrowly passed by Congress on Friday, would boost the ailing economy and create badly needed jobs.
>
> The president said: "By leaving American families with more to spend, more to save and more to invest, these reforms will help boost the nation's economy and create jobs."
>
> He added: "When people have extra take-home pay, there's greater demand for goods and services. And employers will need more workers to meet that demand."

Interpretation: Bush is mainly presented as a Sayer, a minor role of possessor. In finer detail, 2 of the saying verbs suggest confrontation ('defend', 'insist').

2. Construal Analysis

2.1 Example

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> The president said: "By leaving American families with more to spend, more to save and more to invest, these reforms will help boost the nation's economy and create jobs."
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> He added: "When people have extra take-home pay, there's greater demand for goods and services. And employers will need more workers to meet that demand."
>
> Bush said tens of millions of families and small businesses would benefit from the tax cut.

Interpretation: Bush is mainly presented mainly as a Sayer, a minor role of Possessor. In finer detail, 2 of the saying verbs suggest confrontation ('defend', 'insist').

2. Construal Analysis

2.2 Some readings

An early example:

- Halliday, M.A.K. (1985) *Introduction to Functional Grammar.* Appendix 1 (the Silver text)

The following examples are on the webiste:

- Martin, James R. 1986 "Grammaticalising ecology: The politics of baby seals and kangaroos." In T. Threadgold, EA Grosz, G. Kress and MAK Halliday (eds), Semiotics, Ideology, Language. Sydney: Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture. 225-268.
- Martin J.R. and D. Rose (2006) *Working with Discourse* (p85-86). Example of using transitivity analysis to see how participants are construed.
- Butt, D.G., Lukin, A. and Matthiessen, C.M.I.M. (2004) `Grammar - The First Covert Operation of War', Discourse & Society 15(2-3): 267-90.

2. Construal Analysis

2.3 Indirect construal

Analyse the degree to which participants are realised in roles which are unnatural for the situation being given

Indirect:

46000 soldiers	*were*	*casualties*	*in the three-day battle*
Token	Process: relational	Value	Circumstance

Direct:

46000 soldiers	*were killed*	*in the three-day battle*
Goal	Process: material	Circumstance

For each indirect realisation, ask yourself the question: what is the writer doing by using an indirect construal of the process?

2. Construal Analysis

2.3 Indirect construal

Another example:

	a three year old girl	was	among those killed
Indirect:	Carrier	Process: relational	Attribute

	(someone)	killed	a three year old girl
Direct:	Actor	Process: material	Goal

2. Construal Analysis

2.3 Indirect construal

From Butt *et al*

"While Collins's speech creates a largely congruent relationship between the grammar of mood and the enactment of the social roles and relations – in particular, the hierarchy of command, his experiential choices create a number of metaphorical patterns: the relationship between the experience of the world of warfare and Collins' construal of it in the grammar is often 'indirect'. One reason for this is of course that the speech is concerned with a protocol for warfare, not a procedure. But the protocol is a fairly 'indirect' one, involving abstraction and metaphor – show + pity, respect; rock + world; allow + dignity in death. Let us consider the experiential features of the speech in general, and then return to the key motif of how warfare is construed."

2. Construal Analysis

2.4 Participant Role / Tense co-selection

Butt, D.G., Lukin, A. and Matthiessen, C.M.I.M. (2004) `**Grammar - The First Covert Operation** of War', **Discourse** & **Society** 15(2-3): 267-90.

"In fact, there is a systematic pattern of co-selection, which can be observed in relation to tense selection and the selection of material process.

- For actions in which the US (in its various manifestations in the speech) has the Actor role, the tense is predominantly future: of concern is not what the US has done in the past, or its habitual activities, but predominantly what the US 'will do'.
- By contrast, for actions in which 'terrorists' (in their various manifestations in the speech) have the Actor role, the tense selection is likely to be present, and predominantly habitual present, i.e. the construal of characteristic behaviours. This can be seen to tie in with the role of action as the main mode for construing the nature of the 'enemy'."

2. Construal Analysis

2.5 Patterns of Circumstance selection

One can characterize a text in terms of the variety of circumstances that exist in its clauses. E.g.,

Purpose: red
Temporal: purple
Location/Destination: green

In 1286, Alexander III, King of Scots, died when he fell off a cliff at Kinghorn in Fife while riding to see his wife on a stormy March night. The successor to the Scottish throne was his granddaughter Margaret. The earls and other great magnates had accepted Margaret as the heir to the throne and arrangements were made to bring her to Scotland. In the meantime several Guardians were appointed to govern in the Queen's absence.

In summary, this text makes strong use of temporal and spatial placement, which makes sense for a history text. Also, purposes are well represented, trying to show causes.