

Transitivity Process To Construct Ideational Meaning in Adila Hassim's Speech at the ICJ (International Court Justice): South Africa's Case Against Israel

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Received 12 June 2024; accepted 22 June 2024; published 31 June 2024

ABSTRACT

This study aims to observe and analyse the transitivity process appears in the speech, investigate the construction of ideational meaning from the speech: how the transitivity patterns reflect the messages conveyed by Adila Hassim in her speech at the ICJ (International Court Justice). The transitivity analysis of Adila Hassim's speech at the ICJ reveals a strategic use of different processes to construct ideational meaning. In this study, a qualitative approach was employed. The material process is most prominent (13 or 43.33%), emphasizing actions and events. The relational process follows (10 or 33.33%), highlighting relationships and attributes. Verbal and mental processes each account for 6.66% (2 verbal and 2 mental process) reflecting the importance of communication and cognition. The existential process, (3 or 10%), put the speech in reality. The absence of behavioral processes indicates no focus on behaviors. Adila Hassim's speech effectively combines these processes to present a strong and powerful argument for South Africa's case against Israel at the ICJ.

KEYWORDS

Transitivity Process
Ideational meaning
International Court
Justice
South Africa's Case
Against Israel

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1. Introduction

In a horrific turn of event that is happening in the world regarding the ongoing genocide declared by Israel towards Palestinian people, Adila Hassim, a South African advocate representing South Africa's case against Israel at the ICJ (International Justice Court) on January 11th 2024. In the speech, she gave details of what led to the genocidal allegations. This study aims to observe and analyse the transitivity appears in the speech, understanding how language structures convey meaning and how communication is organized within social contexts. According to the video of the speech that is broadcasted in SABC NEWS YouTube Channel, Israel is being called out by South Africa for carrying out genocidal activities in Gaza, including mass murder, severe physical harm, forced relocation, blocking out the basic supplies, and devastation of medical facilities. South Africa believed that these deeds show a pattern of a genocide intention and ethnic cleansing. Based on SABC NEWS, genocide is never broadcast. The past 13 weeks has given proof of genocide and it continues. The people deserve and demand protection of the courts. Looking at the humanity issue that is happening in Gaza and trying to understand how language structures convey meaning in the speech, therefore, the researcher find it is interesting to analyse the transitivity and the process in it, elaborating it with Michael Halliday's theory about Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL).

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) originally introduced by Michael Halliday in the 1960s, provides a meaning formation, learning, and social change as a social semiotic theory. The idea that language is a useful tool for meaning-making that expands to reflect and create the situational and cultural circumstances in which semiotic systems are used and develop is Halliday's approach (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). The unit of analysis in Systemic Functional Linguistics is the "clause," not the "sentence." When discussing clauses as representations using the transitivity system, we shall analyse clauses in terms of who does what to whom, who/what does what/who, and when, where, why, or how these actions occur. This involves three semantic categories that broadly explain how real-world phenomena are represented as linguistic structures: processes, participants, and circumstances.

Meanings	Grammar
Acknowledged by	
Process	Verbal group
Participants	Noun group or Adjectival group
Circumstances	Adverbial group or Prepositional phrase

According to systemic theory, a clause is a unit that combines meanings from three distinct categories. To create a single phrase, three different structures—each representing a different form of semantic organization—are mapped into one another. It refers to these semantic constructs "meta-functions" which are ideational, interpersonal and textual interpretation.

The first one is ideational interpretation or statement as a representation of something. This meaning appears through wording by the Transitivity system, which is influenced by the discourse field. The ideational metafunction is divided into two components: experiential and logical. From the experiential viewpoint, language consists of a range of resources for referring to entities in the world and describing how these entities interact or relate to each other. On the other hand, the logical metafunction leads to the types of connections we make between messages. It allows us to create more complex structures by combining two or more clauses into a larger unit (Thompson, 2014). The logical mode offers the tools for creating different types of complexes, such as clause complexes and group complexes. In contrast, the experiential mode is expressed through the system of transitivity. The transitivity system is a part of the experiential metafunction (Martin, Matthiessen & Painter, 1997). Within the transitivity system, which is part of the ideational metafunction, ideational meaning is realized through the analysis of processes, participants, and circumstances.

Processes refers to the actions, events, or states of affairs that are represented in language. Material processes (actions), Mental processes (cognitive activities), Relational processes (describing relationships), Verbal processes (communication), Behavioural (behaving physiologically and psychologically) and Existential (existing beings). Participants are the entities involved in the processes described in the discourse. They can include actors (agents), undergoers (affected entities), and beneficiaries (entities that benefit from the action). Meanwhile circumstances provide additional contextual information about the processes, such as time, place, manner, cause, or purpose.

The second one is interpersonal concept or expression as an exchange. Mood structures function as an expression for it. This meaning is affected by the tenor of

discourse. The fundamental roles humans can assume include speech functions (statement, question, command, offer), typical clause moods (declarative mood, interrogative mood, imperative mood, modulated interrogative mood), and adjunct types according to Suzanne Eggins (2004). Common adjunct types include temporal adjuncts, it provides information about time (e.g., "yesterday," "next week"). Locative adjuncts provide information about place or location (e.g., "in the lobby," "at school"). Manner adjuncts provide information about how an action is performed (e.g., "slowly," "quickly"). Degree adjuncts provide information about the extent or degree of an action or quality (e.g., "very," "extremely") and reason adjuncts provide information about the cause or reason for an action (e.g., "because," "due to").

Finally the third metafunctions is textual interpretation or the message of a clause. The message's structure is expressed through theme frameworks. It discovers the relationship between the clause and the surrounding language as well as the situational context (Halliday and Matthiessen, 1994:309). According to Eggins (2004), the theme structure runs through an outline where the sentence is divided into just two primary components: the rheme and the theme, which make up the first half of the clause. Precisely said, the theme could be described as "the message's starting point," helping the reader identify the thesis statement (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) as the author's intended message. The topic is followed in a sentence by the remaining content of the message, or rheme (Wang, 2007). The success and objective of a message depend on the informational flow of a clause from theme to rheme.

Processes are central to the clause from an experiential viewpoint: the clause mainly focuses on the action, event, or state involving the participants. The process is usually conveyed by the verbal group within the clause. Usually, the process can encompass an additional element beyond the verbal group itself (Thompson, 2014). In a simple way, understanding the process is essential for constructing a clause, as it forms the core that conveys meaning within the clause or discourse. Therefore, this study focuses on transitivity process types, as these types are likely to be found in clauses and how the meaning of speaker's speech is represented or conveyed to know its role and meaning.

This research intends to analyse the transitivity processes in Adila Hassim's Speech: identify and classify the different transitivity processes (material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioural, and existential) present in Adila Hassim's speech. The research is also to expose the frequency of each transitivity process type within the speech to determine which processes are most prominently used. It also investigates the construction of ideational meaning from the speech: how the transitivity patterns reflect the messages conveyed by Adila Hassim in her speech to make a strong and powerful argument at the ICJ (International Court Justice).

2. Method

In this study, a qualitative methodology was used. This approach involves collecting non-numerical data, usually using factors such as interviews, observations, and focus groups, to identify underlying meanings, patterns, and themes. According to Moleong (2005:3), qualitative research is a form of research that has the aim to understand a phenomenon about what is experienced from the subject of research such as behaviour, perceptions, motivations, actions, etc. holistically, and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language, in a special context by utilising various natural methods. This type of research use a descriptive qualitative and has the purpose to examine language

variety used in the research object to contribute a better understanding of language and society, as well as the relationship between language and the context.

The data is collected from SABC NEWS YouTube Channel with the link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJzf_52xBJk that will lead to SA-Israel ICJ case | Adila Hassim SC's video in 24.50 minutes as the research object. The data collection technique uses listening and note-taking techniques (Mahsun, 2007: 92). Researcher use the transcript tool in the YouTube as a way to understand better during the watching. The data analysis technique uses content analysis by classifying data (Suharsaputra, 2012: 187), presenting data and providing conclusions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Result

In this research "Transitivity in Adila Hassim Speech at the ICJ (International Court Justice): South Africa's Case Against Israel", the researcher analysed the keywords of transitivity processes to be analysed in order to avoid going wide.

Table 1. Keywords of transitivity processes in ICJ

Transitivity process	Keywords
Material process	"show," "spared," "thank," "dropped," "killed," "attack," "blocking."
Mental process	"think," "feel," "see," "believe," "fear," "understanding."
Relational process	"is," "be," "have," "become."
Verbal process	"say," "tell," "ask," "announce,"
Behavioural process	"breathe," "dream," "cry," "watching."
Existential process	"exist," "is", "happen," "arise."

Table 2. Types of transitivity process in ICJ

Types of Transitivity Process	Findings	Verbs
Material Process	13	"show," "spared," "thank," "dropped," "killed," "blocking."
Mental Process	2	"think," "believe"
Relational Process	10	"is," "become"
Verbal Process	2	"say," "ask"
Behavioural Process	-	-
Existential Process	3	"is"

3.2. Discussion

Data 1: Material Process

“Thank you Madame President, distinguished members of the Court.” (minute 0:01).

Participants	Process	Circumstances
-Madame President -Distinguished members of the court	-thank	-

The sentence above showed that the speaker is giving a gratitude action by saying “thank” to the participants involved (madam president and distinguished member of the court). One of the definitions of the word “thank” in Oxford Dictionary is to express gratitude or appreciation for something they have done or given. The verb “thank” represents the material process. In functional grammar, the process typically refers to what is happening or the action taking place. Here, “thank” is the action performed by the speaker. Thus, “thank” is classified as a material process because it represents an action being performed by the speaker towards the recipients (“Madame President” and “Distinguished members of the Court”).

In the material processes, there are two participants role, which are: **actor and goal:**

The speaker	thank	Madame President and Distinguished members of the court
Actor	Process	Goal

The speaker role as the actor that did something which is giving a gratitude action by saying “thank” as the verb (material process). The gratitude expression shown by the word “thank” is purposely given to Madame President and Distinguished members of the court for giving her an opportunity to speak up regarding the current issue that has been a global concern lately. She stands as South Africa’s representatives to bring the case against Israel at the ICJ (International Court Justice) to point out the judges, world leaders, and the listeners about Israel war crimes and it’s action to genocidal allegations towards Palestinian. Given the opportunity to speak up and represent South Africa, she felt thankful to be standing in front of Madame President and Distinguished members of the court.

Data 2: Material Process

“Within the definition of genocide the actions show a systematic pattern of conduct from which genocide can be inferred.” (minute 00:50)

Participants	Process	Circumstances
-the actions	-show	-a systematic pattern of conduct from which genocide can be inferred.

In the sentence "Within the definition of genocide, the actions show a systematic pattern of conduct from which genocide can be inferred," the main structure involves a material process. Here is the breakdown:

The actions	show	a systematic pattern of conduct.
Actor	Process	Goal

In the context, Adila Hassim tried to point out the genocidal allegations based on the definition of the genocide. According to the case, she said it's her duty to inform the court of the behaviours genocide that have caused to the urgent motions for temporary resolutions under article 41 of the South African Convention. South African court believed that Israel had violated article two of the Convention by making clear the actions that fell inside the meaning that lies in genocide, those acts demonstrated a planned structure of behaviour by the way genocide could be concluded.

"The actions" are the ones performing the action, it's called the actor. The verb "show" indicates the action of displaying or revealing. The goal is the entity affected by the action, specifically the pattern being shown, in this case "a systematic pattern of conduct." Therefore, this structure clearly identifies the elements of the material process.

Data 3: Material Process

"Some of the biggest and most destructive bombs available they are dropped by lethal fighter jets." (minute 08.00)

Participants	Process	Circumstances
-lethal fighter jets	-are dropped	- some of the biggest and most destructive bombs available

The sentence primarily uses a material process to describe an action happening to the bombs. Let's analyse it based on material process structure:

Lethal fighter jets	are dropped	some of the biggest and most destructive bombs available
Actor	Process	Goal

Remember that in a material process, the participants are the actor or the entity who did something and there is a goal, which is the entity that is affected by action. In here, we can see the material process verb "are dropped" indicates that the bombs are undergoing the action of being dropped. The actors performing this action are "lethal fighter jets," and the goal affected by this action is "some of the biggest and most destructive bombs available." In summary, the sentence involves a material process where the action of dropping is performed by lethal fighter jets, and the affected participants are some of the largest and deadliest explosives ever made. In the speech, the affected participant is the Palestinian that is being attacked by lethal fighter jets that are dropped, and in the full speech, Adila

Hassim mentioned that following 7 October Israel deployed 6,000 bombs per week at least 200 times it has deployed 2,000 bombs in southern areas of Palestine designated as safe these bombs have also decimated the north including refugee camps 2,000 bombs.

Data 4: Mental Process

“At least 70% of whom are believed to be women and children.” (minute 6:00)

Participants	Process	Circumstances
-women and children	-are believed	-at least 70% of whom (Palestinian who have been killed)

In the context, it explained about the damage and the violence conducted by Israel to Palestinian. In the speech, it says 23, 210 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces during the sustained attacks over the last 3 months and at least 70% of whom are believed to be women and children. The sentence primarily uses a mental process to describe the belief held about a group. In the term "mental process" refers to a particular kind of transitivity process that defines a process of sensing, feeling, thinking, or perceiving. Here is the analysis:

the people or authorities holding the belief (UN Secretary General)	are believed	at least 70% of whom are women and children
Senser	Process	Phenomenon

In the full speech, Adila was retelling what UN Secretary General has explained five weeks ago of how widespread Israel's killing is in Gaza as well as why no place is secure. The mental process verb "are believed" indicates that there is a belief held by the senser, which is the UN Secretary. The phenomenon, or the content of the belief, is that "at least 70% of whom are women and children." Therefore, according to the theory and examples of mental process, the word “believe” is in the mental process type. The UN Secretary played the senser who sense that at least 70% of whom (Palestinian who have been killed) are women and children that is known as the phenomenon.

Data 5: Mental Process

“You think getting aid into Gaza is easy, think again.” (minute 23:15)

Participants	Process	Circumstances
-You	-think	-getting aid into Gaza is easy

In the speech, Adila Hassim quote the words of the UN under Secretary General on 5 January 2024 that said if you (the members of the court, world leaders and everyone in the world) think that getting aid into Gaza is easy, the she wanted everyone to rethink. She exposed that before vehicles can even enter, there are three levels of inspections. This is

not an easy task to get aid into Gaza because Israel controls the security of the territories even the humanitarian aid to enter.

Now let's analyse the transitivity process here. The in data 6 involves a mental process. Here's the breakdown:

You	think	getting aid into Gaza is easy
Senser	Process	Phenomenon

"You" is the entity experiencing the cognitive action of thinking, called the senser. The mental process that occurred is "think" indicates the act of thinking or holding a belief. Meanwhile the words "getting aid into Gaza is easy" is the content of the thought being considered by the senser called the phenomenon. Therefore, the sentence above showed a mental process of transitivity because the keywords that showed up is "think" indicating a cognitive action or process.

Data 6: Relational Process

"It is a privilege to appear on behalf of the Republic of South Africa in this case of exceptional importance." (minute 0:08)

Participants	Process	Circumstances
-Republic of South Africa	-is	-a privilege

The verb "is" indicated a state of being. It involves states of being or having and characterized by the involvement of a participant, which in the sentence, the carrier is having a privilege to speak up in front of participants in the room. Thus, the sentence in data 7 showed a relational process. Here is the breakdown:

It	is	a privilege
Carrier	Process	Attribute

The word "it" as the carrier refers to the fact that the speaker had the chance to deliver her speech at the ICJ (International Court Justice), followed by the relational process with the present tense "is" to indicate a state of being or having the "privilege" that in the sentence played as an attribute.

Data 7: Relational Process

"It's a case that underscores the very essence of our shared humanity as expressed in the preamble to the genocide convention." (minute 0:16)

Participants	Process	Circumstances
-Our	-is	-a case that underscores the very essence of our shared humanity as expressed in the preamble to the genocide convention

When Adila Hassim mentioned “our” as the participant, she meant that South African people and everyone around the world that she represents in the court, feel that the need to bring up the case regarding genocidal allegations done by Israel to the Palestinian. The verb process occurred “is” indicated a state of being or identity, which is the characteristic of relational process. The carrier is the entity that is being characterized or identified. Here, “it” refers to “a case.” Here is the breakdown:

It	is	a case
Carrier	Process	Attribute

Talking about the the attribute, it provides more information about the carrier. In this case, it describes the nature or identity of “it.” So, in the sentence in data 8, “it” serves as the carrier, “is” acts as the relational process, and the attribute is “a case” that lies in circumstances table to fully explain it.

Data 8: Relational Process

“The forced evacuation from their homes is inevitably permanent.” (minute 12:45)

Participants	Process	Circumstances
-their homes (Palestinian)	-is	-the forced evacuation is inevitably permanent

In the sentence above, the main structure involves a relational process. The relational process verb “is” serves to link the carrier, “the forced evacuation from their homes,” with the attribute listed in the table. The carrier, “the forced evacuation from their homes,” is the entity being described or identified. The attribute, “inevitably permanent,” characterizes the forced evacuation as having a lasting and unavoidable situation. Here is the breakdown:

The forced evacuation from their homes	is	inevitably permanent
Carrier	Process	Attribute

In the speech, Adila explained that the purposeful denial of fuel, water, food, and other necessities of life, along with the ban of humanitarian aid, was obviously intended to destroy Palestinian population to the point where displacement from their homes is surely permanent. The sentence uses a relational process to describe the nature of the forced evacuation. It identifies (the carrier) as being the words listed in the attribute. This relational process links the entity being described (the evacuation) with its characteristic (permanency), indicating that the evacuation is not only forced but also unchangeable and lasting.

Data 9: Verbal Process

“As The Honourable minister has said entry and exit by air and sea to Gaza is prohibited.”
(minute 01:58)

Participants	Process	Circumstances
-The honourable minister -Gaza	-has said	-entry and exit by air and sea to Gaza is prohibited.

Lets breakdown the sentence above together with the types of transitivity process. When we look to the process, the word “said” appear as the theory that has been explained in the literature review section or discussion in the scope of the problems. It shows an expression of saying processes. Here is the breakdown of verbal process:

The honourable minister	has said	entry and exit by air and sea to Gaza is prohibited.
Sayer	Process: verbal	Verbiage

The honourable minister played as the sayer who performed the verbal action, the process itself shown by the word “has said” which identified as the act of saying, and the verbiage is the message of the saying itself, which in the sentence shown in the verbiage section. Therefore, the transitivity process occurred based on the sentence and it’s analysis, it is clear that it’s a verbal process. There was a sayer, process and verbiage.

Data 10: Verbal Process

“I ask that you call Advocate Tembeka Ngcukaitobi to the podium.” (minute 24:42)

Participants	Process	Circumstances
-I	-ask	-call Advocate Tembeka Ngcukaitobi to the podium

As the closing statement and thanking gestures finished, Adila asked Madame President and distinguished members of the court to welcome her partner to the podium to laid out the case for murderous activities. The sentence in data 11 consists of a verbal process. Now let’s analyse the transitivity’s process structure:

I	ask	you	call Advocate Tembeka Ngcukaitobi
Sayer	Process: verbal	Receiver	Verbiage

Verbal process is the saying process. Sayer, the participant who talks, and receiver, the person to whom the verbalization is addressed, are the participants in the processes. This is the process of conveying messages symbolically. Sayer "I" performs the verbal action of asking. Verbal process lies in the verb "ask" indicates the act of requesting, the receiver is "you" (participants in the meeting), and the verbiage is what is being requested. Thus, this structure shows a verbal process.

Data 11: Existential Process

“There is no indication at all that Israel accepts responsibility for rebuilding what it has destroyed.” (minute 13:33)

Participants	Process	Circumstances
-Israel	-is	-no indication at all that Israel accepts responsibility for rebuilding what it has destroyed.

In the speech, it is said that Israel has now destroyed and broken down predicted 355,000 Palestinian houses resulting in at least half a million Palestinians with no place to come back to. The sentence in data 12 primarily involves an existential process indicating the absence of something. Let’s breakdown the structure:

There	is	no indication at all that Israel accepts responsibility for rebuilding what it has destroyed.
	Process	Existence: event

The existential verb "is" indicates the existence of the indication. The existent, "no indication at all," states what is lacking. The structure indicates the absence of Israel's expressed responsibility for the damage it has caused.

Data 12: Existential Process

“There is nowhere safe for them to flee.” (minute 11:21)

Participants	Process	Circumstances
-them (Palestinian)	-is	-nowhere safe for them to flee

The context discuss about the third genocidal act under Article 2 C that is conducted by Israel. Adila Hassim exposed that Israel has purposefully put Gaza under miserable

circumstances that are meant to result in its physical death. One of the ways that Israel did is the fact that almost 85% of Palestinians in Gaza have been forced to relocate because nowhere they could go that would be secure, and those who are unable to do so or refuse are murdered in their houses. In the sentence of data 13, the main structure involves an existential process. The existential process verb "is" serves to indicate the existence (or lack) of a safe place.

There	is	nowhere safe for them to flee.
	Process	Existence: event

The existent, "nowhere safe for them to flee," describes what is being stated to exist or, more accurately, what is lacking in existence. The phrase "nowhere safe" indicates the absence of any safe place, and "for them to flee" specifies the context which is Palestinian people. The existential verb "is" emphasized the non-existence of "nowhere safe," and the existent "nowhere safe for them to flee" provides the specific context of this absence. This structure focuses on stating that no safe place exists for the Palestinian to escape to, emphasizing the existential condition of lacking safety.

4. Conclusion

This study aims to examine and analyse the transitivity processes present in Adila Hassim's speech at the ICJ, investigating how these processes construct ideational meaning and reflect the messages conveyed. The transitivity analysis of Adila Hassim's speech at the ICJ demonstrates a strategic use of various processes to convey ideational meaning. The material process is the most prominent (13 instances or 43.33%), emphasizing actions and events. The relational process follows (10 instances or 33.33%), highlighting relationships and attributes. Verbal and mental processes each account for 6.66% (2 instances each), reflecting the importance of communication and cognition. The existential process (3 instances or 10%) grounds the speech in reality. The absence of behavioural processes indicates no focus on behaviours. The result and discussion section interprets the findings, highlighting how transitivity patterns reflect the rhetorical strategies used by Adila Hassim, and discusses broader implications for legal and political discourse. Overall, Adila Hassim's speech effectively combined these processes to present a compelling and convincing argument for South Africa's case against Israel.

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