



A Corpus-based Analysis of King Charles's Inaugural Speech from the Perspective of Transitivity

Fatima Al-Maashani¹

¹English Language Centre, University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Sultanate of Oman
Email: f.maashani@gmail.com

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Abstract

After taking the throne, King Charles III addressed a pre-recorded inaugural speech to the people of the United Kingdom and all Commonwealth countries. In this historic speech, the new king affirmed his role as per the customs of the United Kingdom, deeply mourned his mother, and acknowledged his family's new roles by providing them with their respective titles. This study used Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar theory to conduct a transitivity analysis of King Charles III's inaugural speech with the aim of outlining the process types, participants, and circumstances of the speech and identifying the most dominant transitivity type process. A corpus-based analysis was conducted to achieve these aims and UAM software was used to analyze the inaugural speech. The analysis revealed that the frequent transitivity processes found in the speech were material, mental, relational, and verbal processes, and each process type involved its own particular participants and different circumstances. Most significantly, material clauses were the most dominant in the speech to affirm the king's determination and seriousness as he took on his new kingship duties and to ensure the continuity of serving the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth nations.

Keywords: King Charles III, Inaugural Speech, Corpus Analysis, Systemic Functional Grammar, Transitivity

Introduction

Queen Elizabeth II ruled the United Kingdom for 70 years, the longest-serving reign of any British monarch. She served from 1952 until her death on September 8, 2022, at the Balmoral Castle in the United Kingdom, where, according to the reports of the royal palace, she died peacefully. During her lifetime, she was Queen of the Commonwealth Realms, and at the time of her death, she was the head of 15 sovereign states. Furthermore, the late queen had many milestones in terms of development and international and national cohesion. She overcame many civil and natural calamities that occurred during her reign. At the time of her death, her eldest son, King Charles, then the Prince of Wales, assumed the throne immediately (Bowden et al., 2022).

On September 9, 2022, King Charles III formally delivered a historic television

address to the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth nations as sovereign for the first time. The inaugural speech received significant attention across the globe, in which he paid tribute to the late Queen Elizabeth II, affirmed his role as the new king of the United Kingdom, modified the status of his entire family, conferred on his wife Camilla and his son William their respective titles, and in most of the speech, celebrated the life of his late mother (Gilmore, 2022).

Despite the global media coverage across all major channels and TV networks in the UK, as well as social media platforms, questions have been raised regarding the uncertain future of the monarchy, as recent statistics have shown a drop in monarchy support among young Britons (Smith, 2022). Thus, such a prominent historic event represents a new era; it requires a careful choice of persuasive language to successfully shape the public's attitude and retain their trust and support. This study aims to explore the types of transitivity processes employed in this speech and to identify the most dominant transitivity type. Thus, the research aims are as follows:

1. To identify the processes type, participants, and circumstances of the speech
2. To identify the most dominant transitivity process type

Literature Review

Language is an essential aspect of human civilization that facilitates communication and social interactions. It also carries our experiences, ideas, and thoughts and shapes our cultural identities. Thus, language can be considered a social activity tool by which we socialize with others and construe the reality around us.

Over the years, linguists have sought to explore language's correlation with society and its role in reflecting social values and beliefs. Moreover, discourse analysis has emerged as one of the most prominent disciplines in the fields of linguistics and the social sciences. Discourse analysis provides theoretical and methodological approaches for drawing on a thorough understanding of language use in different contexts. In this sense, Cook (1989) asserted that discourse analysis "examines how stretches of language, considered in their full textual, social and psychological context, become meaningful and unified for their users" (p. 1).

Among the different forms of discourses, speeches have remained dominant in the field of discourse analysis. Speech is simply defined as a form of oral discourse. At its core, speech is a fundamental aspect of conveying messages, interacting socially, and maintaining relationships. Further, it is a powerful tool for persuasion and shaping attitudes and beliefs. Due to the flexible nature of speech, speakers can adjust their utterances in different contexts and adapt various techniques to achieve their aims.

Politicians and leaders, for example, rely on speeches as the primary tool for communication. It allows them to adapt their spoken words to the specific context in which the speech is taking place. Additionally, they can employ speeches to pass their agenda,

ideologies, and hidden intentions and influence the public's attitude and opinions. Therefore, to analyze speeches, we cannot ignore the significant role of grammar as the building block of meaning. In fact, grammar is a significant part of language to create meaningful communication. In other words, grammar is considered a core element to decode any hidden meanings in the language (Hidayat, 2018). Based on this view, Michael Halliday proposed the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) theory, focusing on the relationship between linguistic utterances and the sociocultural context in which they are used. He believed that language is a system of linguistic choices speakers can utilize to fulfil their communicative purposes in various social contexts. The SFG focuses on the analysis of the clause because it is the core component of meaning that represents our inner and outer worlds (Halliday, 1994).

The SFG system divides language into three metafunctions: interpersonal, textual, and ideational. The interpersonal metafunction involves the interaction between speakers or writers with their audience and refers to how language is used to establish social and personal relations between them, while textual metafunction refers to the organization of ideas within a text and how they are structured coherently and cohesively. Ideational metafunction reveals how speakers employ language to encode their world of experience, both the physical world and the inner world of their consciousness. It has two sub-functions: the experiential and the logical. The logical sub-metafunction is mainly concerned with relationships between clauses and making sense of the overall meaning, while the experiential sub-metafunction is about the grammatical patterns chosen by speakers to make meaning and is related to the system of transitivity (Halliday, 1994). The transitivity system is particularly employed for classifying clauses in terms of the relationship between verbs and other structural components. It shows experiential meanings through six major processes: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential. Each process consists of three elements: the process itself, the participants, and the circumstances. The process is expressed using verbal phrases, whereas the participants are identified using noun phrases. In addition, the circumstances are expressed with adverbial or prepositional phrases, which are classified into nine types: extent, location, manner, cause, contingency, accompaniment, role, matter, and angle (Lock, 1996). Figure 1 shows the process types with their meanings.

PROCESS TYPE	Category meaning	Participants, directly involved	Participants, obliquely involved
material: action event	'doing' 'doing' 'happening'	Actor, Goal	Recipient, Client; Scope; Initiator; Attribute
behavioural	'behaving'	Behaver	Behaviour
mental: perception cognition desideration emotion	'sensing' 'seeing' 'thinking' 'wanting' 'feeling'	Senser, Phenomenon	Inducer
verbal	'saying'	Sayer, Target	Receiver; Verbiage
relational: attribution identification	'being' 'attributing' 'identifying'	Carrier, Attribute Identified, Identifier; Token, Value	Attributor; Beneficiary Assigner
existential	'existing'	Existent	

Figure 1: Process types (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 311)

These processes are generally realized through verbs of action. They are explained as follows. The material process is the process of doing and it construes external experiences. By contrast, mental process refers to an individual's internal experiences, such as emotion, cognition, desires, and perception. The relational process is the process of being, becoming, and having. It explains the relationship between two notions, things, or people. Relational processes can be classified into identifying, attributive, circumstantial, and possessive. Existential process indicates the existence of things and events, while behavioral process refers to psychological and physical behavior; in other words, it is a combination of mental and material processes. It is important to note that material, mental, and relational clauses constitute major types of process, whereas verbal, behavioral, and existential clauses serve as minor types (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

The transitivity model has been widely used by researchers as a theoretical framework for analyzing speeches. Yuqiong and Fengjie (2018) examined David Cameron's speech on retaining Scotland from a transitivity perspective and concluded that the dominance of material and relational processes made his speech more objective and persuasive. In addition, Liping (2014) stated that material processes were frequently used

within Winston Churchill's speech to manifest determination and confidence and to persuade the audience that Great Britain would not be defeated during World War II. Consistent with Liping (2014), the research by Yu (2020) on Queen Elizabeth's speech amid the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that material process was the most employed in the text to reassure Britons that they could win the battle against the disease. Furthermore, Hidayat (2018) analyzed the inaugural speech of Donald Trump and found that President Trump mostly utilized material process in his speech to persuade the audience of his seriousness and sincerity.

The important findings in the studies mentioned above make it abundantly evident that transitivity analysis is crucial and plays an important role in construing the meanings and ideologies behind particular linguistic choices, especially those used in political speeches to influence the audience. It sheds light on how effectively language is utilized to convey the speaker's intentions. As stated before, the transitivity model has been commonly used to analyze speeches. Several researchers (AlAfnan, 2022; Hidayat, 2018; Hidayat et al., 2019; Kondowe, 2014; Xiang, 2022; Yujie & Fengjie, 2018; Zhao & Zhang, 2017) have analyzed inauguration speeches in the perspective of transitivity. However, no study exists on the analysis of transitivity regarding King Charles's inaugural speech. As a result, this study fills in the gap in the existing literature and contributes to the understanding of transitivity theory.

Methodology

Research Design

The analysis used a corpus-based methodology to achieve the aims of this study. McEnery and Hardie (2011) assured that corpus tools could be utilized to generate both qualitative and quantitative data. Thus, text analysis was conducted using the UAM corpus tool (version 6.2e), which can be performed manually and automatically. The quantitative data demonstrated the statistics, frequencies, and percentages of the different types of transitivity processes, participants, and circumstances that occur in the clauses, whereas the qualitative data included the analysis of the clauses and interpretation of the findings.

The Transcript

On September 9, 2022, King Charles III formally delivered his first speech as king from Buckingham Palace's Blue Drawing Room, which lasted for approximately nine minutes. The inaugural speech transcript, consisting of 901 words, was later published on the New York Times's official website, which was used as the corpus for this research.

Data Analysis

The UAM corpus software was downloaded (www.corpustool.com), and the speech transcript was incorporated into the software. Furthermore, an automatic annotation layer was created for SFL-Transitivity. The annotation scheme was manually checked to ensure that all the processes were included.

In this study, a clause was considered as the core unit of the analysis because “transitivity is a system of the clause, affecting not only the verb serving as process but also participants and circumstances” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 227). Based on transitivity analysis, the UAM corpus software automatically identified and analyzed all elements of the clauses found in the text, as shown in Figure 2. The generated analysis was manually checked to ensure an accurate annotation.

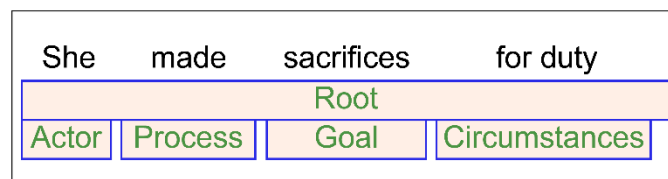


Figure 2: Example of analyzed elements of a clause

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of transitivity analysis. Figure 3 depicts the statistics of the main elements of all processes. The speech included 103 processes, 123 participants, and 108 circumstances.

GRAMMATICAL-RANK	N	%
- participant	123	26.6
- process	103	22.3
- circumstance	108	23.4
- configuration	87	18.8
- configuration-complex	0	0.0
TOTAL:	421	91.1%

Figure 3: Grammatical ranking of transitivity process

Table 1 shows the most frequently used participants in the speech. King Charles III used the personal pronoun *I* 21 times, indicating the speaker's intention to represent a clear position of himself as king to the audience. According to Karapetjana (2011), the use

of this pronoun helps the speaker “to show his personal involvement and commitment, authority and personal responsibility” (p. 43). The pronoun *she* occurs six times within the text, referring to King Charles’s late mother and his wife, whereas the pronoun *you* is mentioned six times to establish an interpersonal relationship with the audience. Furthermore, the speaker employed the pronoun *we*, which implies “establishing rapport with the interlocutors, thereby encouraging solidarity and creating interpersonal involvement with the audience” (Karapetjana, 2011, p. 43).

Table 1: Frequent participants found in the analyzed processes

participant	number
I	21
she	6
you	6
we	5

Figure 4 displays the overall frequency of transitivity processes involved in the speech as percentages. It shows that the material process occupies the first rank, with a frequency of 53, making up 11.4% of the total processes. It is then followed by the mental and relational processes, which occurred 17 and 12 times, respectively, accounting for 6.3%. The verbal process has a frequency of four, comprising 0.9% of the total analyzed data. The analyzed text has one existential clause and zero behavioral clauses, as they are categorized as minor types in the model of transitivity (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

CLAUSE-TYPE	N	%
- material	53	11.4
- mental	17	3.7
- verbal	4	0.9
- relational	12	2.6
- behavioral	0	0.0
- existential	1	0.2
TOTAL:	87	18.8%

Figure 4: Types of transitivity processes

These results are consistent with Yu’s (2020) study, in which the most frequent transitivity processes were material, mental, and relational, which made Queen Elizabeth’s speech more convincing. Further detailed analyses will be conducted in an ordered manner.

Material Process

As previously discussed, the material process demonstrates the act or process of doing an event. It consists of a goal and an actor as the main constituent. The analyzed text contained 53 material clauses that were employed to manifest determination to sincerely conduct duties. The domination of material clauses in the speech was predicted as they are “considered the default processes” (Munalim, 2017, p. 160). Material processes are also the most dominant in political discourse because leaders always aim to present powerful and persuasive speeches to the audience. To achieve this, they frequently use material clauses in their speech (Liping, 2014). Thus, the new king was keen to make his first public address serious and vigorous. Table 2 presents some examples of material processes from the speech.

Table 2: Examples of material clauses

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1. *She **made** sacrifices for duty.*
 2. *Her dedication and devotion as Sovereign never **wavered**, through times of change and progress, through times of joy and celebration, and through times of sadness and loss.*
 3. *I shall **endeavor** to serve you with loyalty, respect, and love, as I have throughout my life.*
 4. *My life will, of course, **change** as I take up my new responsibilities.*
 5. *In a little over a week's time we will **come** together as a nation, as a Commonwealth and indeed a global community, to lay my beloved mother to rest.*
-

Clause 1 reveals the verb *made* as a material process. It is followed by the pronoun *she*, referring to the late queen, which is assigned the function of the actor. The word *sacrifices* stands as a goal, and *for duty* is the circumstance of purpose that adds further information to the process. The material process implies that the sacrifices were tangible and required substantial efforts. Also, it accentuates the unselfish devotion of the late queen to serve the nations.

In example 2, the material process is represented with the verb *wavered*, and the actor is realized through the phrase *her dedication and devotion as Sovereign*, whereas the phrase *through times of change and progress, through times of joy and celebration, and through times of sadness and loss* is used as a circumstance of condition. It can be noticed that the material process indicates the unchanging nature of the late queen's commitment. It suggests that her devotion to serve the nations was solid and constant through different circumstances.

The third clause involves the verb *endeavor*, and the actor is defined by the pronoun *I*, which reflects serious personal involvement and commitment. As we see, the phrase *to serve you with loyalty, respect, and love* stands as a circumstance of cause,

whereas as *I have throughout my life* is a circumstance of manner. The king confirmed his genuine intention to follow the example of his mother in serving the people of the nations with unwavering devotion. In fact, he highlighted his insistence on maintaining continuity and constancy in fulfilling his kingship responsibilities. He used a material process to deliver a message that his commitment would be firm, and it would involve the physical act of serving. In this case, the material process provides the audience a sense of power and determination (Liping, 2014).

In the next clause, the material process is characterized with the verb *change*, and the actor is *my life*. The circumstance of reason is the phrase *as I take up my new responsibilities*. The material process here noticeably carries a hidden meaning, where the king indicated that his life will change in that he will no longer give much time and energy to the charities and issues that he was earlier occupied with, referring to his endeavors to conserve the environment as a pioneer in environmental issues in the United Kingdom (Jacobo, 2022). In this context, the king chose not to use a negative approach to convey his true meaning. Putting the message in a direct approach would likely have painted a negative picture, and some people would have made it a negative political tool against him. With this approach, the king contently addressed the issue by outlining why he would be unable to continue with this endeavor as he takes on additional responsibilities.

The last extract illustrates a material process that is identified with the verb *come*. The actor here is the pronoun *we*, referring to people everywhere around the globe. Using a plural personal pronoun indicates a sense of inclusiveness (Halliday, 1994) and refers to solidarity as well (Karapetjana, 2011). Two clauses are characterized as the circumstances of the process. The first one is *together as a nation, as a Commonwealth, and indeed a global community*, and it stands as a circumstance of role. The second is the phrase *to lay my beloved mother to rest*. It is a circumstance that adds more information about the purpose of the process. Based on the analysis, the material process here helps the speaker deliver a hidden message that indicates unity and brings people together, despite the ongoing political tensions and issues that ravaged the globe.

Mental Process

Mental process describes a speaker's mental affairs and shows "different ideologies and reflects emotional tendency" (Shi & Fan, 2019), with the sensor as the main participant. According to Lock (1996), mental process verbs are classified into four types: perceptive, affective, cognitive, and desiderative. In the analyzed text, mental processes occurred in 17 clauses. Table 3 presents the examples.

Table 3: Examples of mental process

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1. *I honor her life of service.*
 2. *But I know this important work will go on in the trusted hands of others.*
 3. *I know that her death brings great sadness to so many of you.*
 4. *I want also to express my love for Harry and Meghan as they continue to build their lives overseas.*
-

The first example contains an affective mental process defined with the verb *honor*. The pronoun *I* is the sensor of the mental process, referring to King Charles III, and the phenomenon is *her life of service*. King Charles III paid a moving and poignant tribute to his late mother to appeal to the audience's emotions. Applying a mental process allowed him to express his deep-rooted feelings of gratitude and gave his mother a final tribute of appreciation. Mental clauses made the speech sincerer, making it easy for the audience to be moved by the words so that they may accept the king's gesture to honor the late queen's memory.

The following example includes the verb *know*, which stands for a cognitive mental process. It illustrates King Charles III's objective recognition and judgment of his new role. The sensor is *I*, and the phenomenon is *this important work will go on in the trusted hands of others*. The use of the personal pronoun *I* and the cognitive verb *know* imply predominance of opinion of leaving his previous responsibilities in safe hands as he embarks to carry out new responsibilities. The carefully chosen words indicate a sense of certainty under the immense pressure of an uncertain future.

In the third example, the verb *know* stands for a cognitive mental process. The speaker used the sensor *I* as an attempt to appeal to the audience's emotions to gain their trust. The phenomenon is the phrase *that her death brings great sadness to so many of you*. The mental process symbolizes the king's knowledge of the high-grief response from the public and the global mourning prompted by the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

In the last statement, the verb *want* reflects a desiderative mental process. The sensor is the pronoun *I*, and the phenomenon is *to express my love for Harry and Meghan*. The phrase *as they continue to build their lives overseas* stands as a circumstance. King Charles III recognized and spoke lovingly of his son Harry and his wife Meghan Markle. Despite their decision to step back from royal duties in 2020, the new king wished them the best in their endeavors. This implies a significant indication that the king offers support to the couple, whose relationship with the family has been strained, especially after the interview with Oprah Winfrey in March 2021.

Relational Process

Relational processes are important for ascribing qualities and assigning roles to entities. As previously revealed in Figure 4, King Charles III utilized 12 relational

processes, which is an excellent choice of language to express deep gratitude to his late mother, besides announcing new titles for his family members. Table 4 contains examples of the relational clauses found in the speech.

Table 4: Examples of relational process

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1. *It was a profound personal commitment which defined her whole life.*
 2. *The affection, admiration, and respect she inspired **became** the hallmark of her reign.*
 3. *In recognition of her own loyal public service since our marriage seventeen years ago, she **becomes** my queen consort.*
 4. *Today, I **am** proud to create him Prince of Wales.*
-

In example 1, the clause is defined with the verb *was*, which indicates attributive relational process. The carrier is the pronoun *it*, referring to late Queen Elizabeth II's pledge in Cape Town in 1947. The attribute is the phrase *a profound personal commitment which defined her whole life*. As previously stated, relational processes are used to link two notions together. In this regard, the speaker used a relational process to establish a relationship between the late queen's commitment and its profound impact on her whole life. Indeed, she was remarkably committed to bringing stability and spearheading the nations to greatness throughout her reign.

Moreover, based on the second extract, the verb *became* is used to directly link *the affection, admiration, and respect she inspired* to the attribute *the hallmark of her reign*. The relational process here is utilized to emphasize that the late queen's reign was characterized by affection, admiration, and respect because of her ability to maintain solid ties with her people. The king showed an outpouring of praise and gratitude and acknowledged the noble values that had remarked upon her reign.

The following clause presents an identifying relational process, in which the pronoun *she* is the identifier, and *my queen consort* is the identified. In this clause, the identifying relational process is used to make an announcement of Camilla's new role assigned by the king. The circumstance of cause is *in recognition of her own loyal public service since our marriage seventeen years ago* adds more clarification to the process that reflects a deep gratitude and respect for her efforts throughout the past years.

The last statement represents an attributive relational process. The verb *am* indicates a relational process that establishes a connection between two entities, namely, *I* as the carrier and *proud to create him Prince of Wales* as the attribute. Through the relational process, King Charles III showed feelings of pride and satisfaction towards his decision to emphasize the significance of his announcement, naming his older son William as Prince of Wales.

Verbal Process

The verbal process is the process of saying and involves three participants: the sayer, verbiage, and addressee or receiver. The speech contained only four verbal processes. Although it is regarded as a minor category among other process types, it is “reasonable for a political speech to have a certain percentage of verbal processes since one of its characteristics is informative” (Liping, 2014, p. 135). Table 5 shows the verbal processes found in the speech.

Table 5: Examples of verbal process

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1. She **pledged** in a broadcast from Cape Town to the Commonwealth to devote her life, whether it be short or long, to the service of her people.
 2. I too now solemnly **pledge** myself, throughout the remaining time God grants me, to uphold the Constitutional principles at the heart of our nation
-

The first verbal clause is defined with the verb *pledged*, and the sayer is *she*, referring to the late queen. The receiver here is *the Commonwealth*, and the verbiage is *to devote her life whether it be short or long, to the service of her people*. The king referred to the late queen's famous speech in Cape Town when she vowed to serve with profound devotion and commitment. By pointing out the late queen's pledge, King Charles III gave an indication of keeping his mother's legacy alive.

The following statement is realized by the verb *pledge* to emphasize the speaker's duty of service. The actor is defined by the pronoun *I* to state his position as the new sovereign. The verbiage is *to uphold the Constitutional principles at the heart of our nation*, and the adverb *solemnly* is a circumstance of manner. The new king expressed his intention to echo his mother's vow and show his full commitment in his mother's footsteps to diligently serve the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. King Charles III made a solemn pledge to draw attention to his personal commitment and sincerity in taking up his new duties, therefore inspiring confidence in his new era.

Conclusion

This paper analyzes King Charles III's inaugural speech from the perspective of transitivity. Apart from giving tribute to his mother, King Charles III used the speech to define his duty as a new king, explicitly delegating his previous role as the Prince of Wales to his son, Prince William, who became heir to the throne. The king also vowed to continue the duty of service, as his mother Queen Elizabeth II did. Transitivity can be very useful to unearth hidden meanings embodied in the speech and reveal the ideational meanings within the chosen utterances. The corpus-based results showed that the major and frequent process

types were material, mental, and relational. The most dominant process type was the material process, used to make the speech more powerful and persuasive. These findings indicate the vital role of language as a powerful tool not only for communicating information, but also to shape our understanding of the world.

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