THE IDENTIFICATION OF MINOR TYPES OF PROCESSES FROM A FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Mădălina Cerban
Assoc. Prof., PhD., University of Craiova

Abstract:Within the systemic-functional framework, clauses can be analysed according to three metafunctions they embody: textual, interpersonal and experiential, realized by the transitivity system. The term "transitivity" is used in a broad sense, referring to a system for describing the whole clause, rather than just the verb and its Object. Transitivity construes our experience in terms of configurations of a process, participants and circumstances. Such configurations are determined by two major systems: process type and circumstantiation.
According to the Process itself and to the number and kind of participants involved, the system displays four major types: material, mental, verbal and relation, each with a small set of subtypes. But there are also further categories located at the three boundaries. Between the material and mental processes there are the behavioral processes which represent the outer manifestation of the inner feelings and actions. Between the mental and relational processes there are the verbal processes which represent the relationship construed in the human consciousness and enacted in the form of language. Between the relational and the material processes there are the existential processes which simply recognize the phenomena by using the verbs "to be", "to exist" or "to happen". In this paper we are concerned with behavioral and existential processes, presenting them from two points of view. On the one hand, we present the particularities of these types, comparing the behavioral processes with mental/verbal and material ones and the existential processes with material and relational ones. On the other hand, the aim of this paper is to present the difficulties that may arise in identifying these two types according to semantic and grammatical criteria.

Keywords:transitivity, process type, behavioural, existential, meteorological clauses

General considerations

Within the systemic-functional framework, clauses can be analysed according to three meta-functions they embody: textual, interpersonal and experiential, realized by the transitivity system. The term "transitivity" is used in a broad sense, referring to the whole clause, rather than just the verb and its Objects. The elements that construe our experience through transitivity are: process, participants and circumstances.

According to the Process itself and to the number and type of participants involved, there are four major types of clauses: material, mental, verbal and relation, each with a small set of subtypes. They represent the majority of clauses in a text although their number is quite different. There are two more types of clauses which embody characteristics from one or more four main types: behavioural and existential.[1]

The behavioural type has both characteristics from mental clauses because they display processes of psychological behaviour, and the participant that is labelled "behaver" is similar to the "senser" from mental clauses. At the same time, the process is more like a 'doing' which is the kind of process the material clauses express.

The existential type has both characteristics from relational clauses because the verb that is used is the same: the verb *to be*. On the other hand, the existential clauses share

[1] Halliday adds a third type, the verbal one which share characteristics of mental and relational clauses (Halliday, 1994: 138), but we consider the verbal clause as a main type

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characteristics with material clauses due to the fact that any kind of phenomenon can be construed as 'thing'. For example:

There was a misunderstanding. Existential
A misunderstanding occurred. Material

I. Behavioural Clauses: between mental/verbal and material

Behavioural clauses represent physiological processes as well as mental or verbal activities. Most behavioural clauses have only one participant which is essential to the realization of the Process and which is called, as we stated above, the Behaver. They construe human behaviour as an active version of verbal and mental processes, meaning that saying and sensing are construed as activities.

The mental clauses that share characteristics with the behavioural clauses are of: perception, cognition and affection. The verbal clauses that share characteristics with the behavioural clauses are those which express forms of behaviour.

Nevertheless, there are two grammatical differences between mental and verbal clauses on the one hand and the behavioural clauses on the other hand.

(i) Behavioural clauses can not project, i.e. they can not occur with a reported clause.

e.g. *They thought it.*
They thought he had left. Mental
They mediated the conflict.
**They mediated he had left.* Behavioural
Jamie explained everything.

Jamie explained that he was coming. Verbal
Jamie laughed.
**Jamie laughed that he was coming.* Behavioural

(ii). Another difference between behavioural clauses and mental clauses of perception is that in the former ones we can not use the present continuous, while in the latter ones this thing is possible.

e.g. *I'm looking at him.* Behavioural
I see him/ I can see him. Mental: perception
I'm listening to John. Behavioural
I hear/ can hear the child playing. Mental: perception
I'm tasting the soup. Behavioural
I taste/can taste salt in the soup. Mental: perception

Similar verbs used in mental clauses of perception are: *to see, to observe*, and in behavioural clauses: *to look at, to view, to stare, to observe, to look over*.

Alongside the mental clauses of perception, behavioural clauses include categories reflecting mental clauses of cognition and affection, as well as verbal ones.

e.g. *Be quite! I'm thinking.* Mental: cognition
I think he is smart. Behavioural

Similar verbs used in mental clauses of cognition are: *to know, to believe*, and in behavioural clauses: *to puzzle, to solve, to work out, to think, to mediate.*

e.g. *The children were enjoying themselves.* Mental: affection
They smiled with happiness. Behavioural

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Similar verbs used in mental clauses of affection are: *to fear, to like, to frighten, to scare, to alarm, to disgust, to please, to amuse, to* upset, and in behavioural clauses: *to frown, to grin, to gasp, to tremble, to shake.*

e.g. *She told me she was coming by plane.* Verbal
They all talked at once. Behavioural

Similar verbs used in verbal clauses are: *to say, to talk, to tell, to ask*, and in behavioural clauses: *to moan, to mutter, to chatter, to gossip, to talk, to speak, to sing, to praise, to cough*.

Behavioural clauses also include more material-like subtypes. "The border area between material processes and behavioural ones is covered by two main types, physiological processes, such as *to twinch, to shiver, to tremble, to sweat,* and social processes – *to kiss, to hug, to embrace, to dance, to play*, etc."[2]. Both these subtypes share some characteristics with verbal clauses from different angles:
- physiologically: *to cough, to gasp*
- socially: *to dance, to sing, to talk.*

II. Existential Clauses: between material and relational clauses

Existential processes have only one participant: the Existent. This type of processes has two main forms of grammatical realization:

(i). with a copula verb and an empty *there* as Subject:

e.g. *There were four cars in front of our house.*
There were twenty people in the party.

The word *there* in such clauses is neither a participant nor a circumstance, it has no function in the transitivity structure of the clause. We can observe this by making the question *Where are?* Which can not be the answer to *There were twenty people in the party*, and we can not say *it is there that were twenty people at the party*.

(ii). with a copula verb, the Existent functioning as Subject and usually with a circumstantial Adjunct of time or place:

e.g.

There	*will be*	*a fight*	*at the next meeting.*
	Process: Existential Process	Existent	Location: temporal Circumstance

A fight	*will be*	*at the next meeting.*
Existent/ Subject	Process: Existential	Location: Temporal Circumstance

Twenty people	*were*	*at the party.*
Existence	Process: Existential	Location: place Circumstance

In an existential clause the *there* signals the process type but does not function as a Location circumstance, nor does it represent a participant. However, existential clauses frequently have a circumstance of Location and if it occurs in thematic (initial) position, the existential *there* may be absent:

e.g. *All around them* *was* *a deep silence.*

[2] Martin, Matthienssen, Painter, (1994), *Working with Functional Grammar*, London: Arnold, pp. 109

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Location Process: Existential Existent

Another common way of locating an existential process in time and space is to add a non-finite clause to the Existent:

e.g. *There is someone**waiting at the door.***
*There is a man**to see you in the hall.***

The Existent and the non-finite clause form a clause complex.

Existential clauses are typically formed with the verb *to be*. This is why they are similar to relational clauses. The same sentence can function as a relational clause in a different context. Let's use the example above:

e.g. *Twenty people were in the party.*

In a relational clause *twenty people* functions as Carrier, and *in the party* as Attribute. Compare with: *Twenty people were apolitical*.

The other verbs that can appear in existential clauses can not be interpreted as relational, being different from either 'atrributive' or 'identifying'. According to their grammatical features, Halliday and Matthienssen[3] divided the verbs serving as Process in existential clauses:

Type	Verbs	
neutral	exist	*to exist, to remain*
	happen	*to occur, to come about, to happen, to take place*
+ circumstantial	time	*to follow*
	place	*to sit, to stand, to lie, to hang, to emerge, to grow*
abstract		*to erupt, to prevail, to flourish*

Existent clauses also resemble material clauses due to the fact that any kind of phenomenon can be construed as a thing, namely person, object, abstract notions, but also any kind of action or event.

e.g. *Is there going to be elections next year?*
There was building reparation last week.

These sentences can be rephrased as material clauses:

e.g. *The elections are going to take place next year.*
The building was repaired last week.

Meteorological clauses

A special attention should be paid to meteorological clauses which are a special case between existential clauses and the material ones. Some meteorological processes are construed as existential clauses,

e.g. *There was a storm/ a gale/ a shower.*

and some are construed as material clauses,

e.g. *The wind is blowing.*
The sun is shining.

There is also a special category which is unique in English, the clauses made up of *it* + *present continuous*:

e.g. *It is raining. It is snowing.*

[3] Halliday & Matthienssen, (2004), *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, London: Arnold, p. 258

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This type does not have any participant in it. *It* serves the interpersonal function of Subject, like *there* in existential clauses, but it has no function in transitivity. This is the reason for which we cannot ask the question: *What is?* can not function as Theme (we cannot say *It is what is raining*). These clauses can be analysed as consisting of a single element, the Process, they are the case between material and existential clauses.

Conclusion:

We can conclude that, although behavioural and existential clauses are considered to be minor types of clauses, they share characteristics with the major types of processes: material, mental, verbal and relative, being sometimes difficult to be identified. Behavioural processes remind us that transitivity categories are not always very definite and sometimes they overlap. Existential processes can be defined in negative terms, expressing the simple existence of an entity without predicating anything else of it.

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