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AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRANSITIVITY AND ERGATIVITY -- TAKING TWO OBITUARIES AS EXAMPLES

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Abstract
This paper discusses the difference and relevance between transitivity and ergativity from the perspective of systemic functional linguistics. This paper analyzes two obituaries of Queen Elizabeth II from the perspective of six process types of transitivity analysis and the ergative and non-ergative aspects of ergativity analysis. The results show that the transitivity analysis is more precise and detailed, while the ergativity analysis is more general. Some clauses are better suited to transitivity analysis and others to ergativity analysis. Both analysis methods play a positive role in the organization and development of the text. Although they have differences, they are interrelated, mutually inclusive and in a complementary relationship. The two analysis methods have different emphases, but there are overlaps.

Keywords: Transitivity analysis, ergativity analysis, obituaries.

Introduction

Transitivity and ergativity are two ways of representing the language process proposed by Halliday. Halliday believes that the essence of language is closely related to our requirements for it and the functions it achieves. All cultures will reflect some universal meta functions in language---conceptual functions, interpersonal functions and textual functions. Among them, conceptual function refers to that language can express various experiences of the external world and the inner world of people, which can be further divided into empirical function and logical function. Transitivity is a semantic system that expresses the conceptual function. Its function is to divide what people see, hear and do in the real world into several kinds of "processes", and to indicate the "participants" and "environmental components" related to various processes. These processes can be divided into material processes, mental processes, relational processes, behavioural processes, verbal processes and existential processes. Every process has its participants. The environmental component is constant in each process.

Like transitivity, ergativity is based on the analysis of processes, but it is different from transitivity. In ergative analysis, each process must have at least one principal factor through which the process can be realized (Halliday, 1968, 1985, 2000, 2004). Halliday calls this essential factor a Medium.

The Process and Medium form the centre of the clause and determine the selection range of other components of the clause. In addition to the Medium, there may also be an external factor, the Agent. If the process is spontaneous, there is no Agent; If it is initiated by an external entity, there is an Agent. The ergativity analysis corresponds to the transitivity analysis.

Transitivity analysis emphasizes the extension of the process, that is, whether the process extends to the goal or not, so the clause can be divided into transitive and intransitive. Ergativity analysis emphasizes the causative meaning of the process, that is, whether the process is spontaneous or triggered by the agent, so the clause has the distinction between ergative and non-ergative. It can be said that in ergativity analysis, process and medium are the core, while the centre of transitivity analysis is the process itself. (Martin, 2010). As for the relation between transitivity and ergativity, Halliday regarded transitivity analysis and ergativity analysis as two complementary analysis methods. Halliday (1970, 1994) regards ergativity as an alternative form of transitivity. Each process can be analyzed from two different perspectives, transitivity and ergativity. As Halliday said in An Introduction to Functional Grammar: "Perhaps in all languages, all transitive systems can do transitivity analysis and ergativity analysis." Based on Halliday's complementarity, linguists have put forward many new views on the specific relationship between transitivity and ergativity. This paper reviews linguists' views on the relationship between transitivity and ergativity. This paper discusses the complementarity of the ergativity and the transitivity from the transitivity analysis and the ergativity analysis of the obituaries of Elizabeth II and then confirms the complementarity of the ergativity and the transitivity.

Literature Review

Since Halliday put forward the transitivity and ergativity, many other scholars not only have analyzed, revised and extended the transitivity and ergativity from different aspects but also have tried to make a theoretical study of them (Matthiessen, 1995; Cheng, 2002; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

The previous studies of transitivity and ergativity can be divided into two parts, one is the theoretical study of it, and the other is the applied study of it. In the theoretical studies of transitivity and ergativity, many linguists have put forward different views on the relationship between them. As mentioned above, Halliday believed that transitivity analysis and ergativity analysis could be substituted for each other. The clauses of any process can be analyzed by using these two modes, and there is a complementary relationship between transitivity and ergativity.

Halliday(1968, 1985) mainly took English as an example to illustrate the complementary relationship between ergativity and transitivity. He believed that English, if not a typical ergative language, could at least be analyzed from an ergative perspective, and any clause could be analyzed transitively and ergatively (Thompson & Ramos, 1995). Halliday (2000) believed that transitivity and ergativity interpret the world of human experience from two different perspectives. The main difference between the two modes lies in the degree of generalization. Transitivity analysis is more specific and detailed than ergativity analysis. Transitivity analysis is concerned with whether an action extends to the object (i.e. the target), while ergativity analysis is concerned with whether the cause of the action is internal or external (Hu Zhuanglin et al, 2005). However, he did not provide a clear explanation of the difference between the two modes. In addition, many other linguists, such as Davides, Thompson and Benson, have inherited Halliday's basic thoughts on transitivity and ergativity, but they hold different opinions.

Davidse (1992) also argued that transitivity and ergativity are mutually complementary. Still, the two of them are at the poles of a continuum (Halliday, 2009). Whether a clause is subject to transitivity analysis or ergativity analysis depends on where its meaning lies on the continuum, i.e. the degree of transitivity and the degree of ergativity embodied in the clause. If the clause exhibits a high degree of ergativity, that is, near the ergative end of the continuum, then the clause is appropriate for ergativity analysis. If the clause shows a high degree of transitivity, that is, near the transitive end of the

Ziming Liu; Fang Guo & Yi Du

continuum, then the sentence is more suitable for transitivity analysis. Some clauses can be analyzed in both modes because they are in the middle of the continuum and semantically involve both extension and causation.

Thompson's (Thompson & Ramos, 1995) view is more neutral. In his opinion, transitivity analysis and ergativity analysis are neither the complementary relation mentioned by Halliday nor the continuum relation mentioned by Davides. He believed that not every process or every clause can be analyzed from two different perspectives, transitive and ergative. Some clauses are more suitable for transitivity analysis and some are more suitable for ergativity analysis. The specific situation is determined by the transitive and ergative degree of the clause. The criteria for judging the transitive and ergative degree of material process clauses are mainly determined by the characteristics of the two kinds of analytical methods. For example, if an action or event is more subject to the will and more actionable, it is more suitable for the transitive mode. On the contrary, it is suitable for the ergative mode (Hopper & Thompson, 1980). The other five processes are more suitable for transitivity analysis because their ergative characteristics are not obvious. Thompson (2004) argues that the ergativity analysis is a more grammaticalized way of expression when language expresses the difference between spontaneous processes and processes caused by external forces.

The conversion of transitive and ergative in the same language is relative, and there is a semantic justification for when to use the ergative mode and when to use the transitive mode. One of the most important factors is the animation of the participants. Dixon(1994) believed that the relationship between transitivity analysis and ergativity analysis is reflected in the participants of the process. Animate participants are mostly used for transitivity analysis, while inanimate participants are mostly used for ergativity analysis. There is a reverse relation between the ergativity analysis and the agent's will. The agent without intention is mostly used in the ergativity analysis, while the agent with intention is mostly used in the transitivity analysis (Lemmens,1998).

Silverstein (1976) also believes that if the animation of the agent is higher than a certain point (the point varies from language to language), the clause should be nominative. If it is below this point, the clause is used in the ergative form. On the other hand, if the animation of the recipient is higher than that of the agent, the ergative form tends to be used (Dixon, 1994).

Langacker(1991) even argues that "every language uses both transitivity analysis and ergativity analysis in different ways. Each language is a collection of these two patterns to varying degrees, and often one prevails more than the other." Based on the complementarity of these two patterns, one can locate a particular language at a specific position in the continuum at the lexical grammatical level.

Zhang Shuiyun(2002) believes that the ergativity analysis is based on the transitivity analysis. Ergativity analysis is a supplement to transitivity analysis. It emphasizes the role of the agent and medium in the clause and further explains the ambiguous part of transitivity analysis from another level. The ergativity analysis is more general and simple than the transitivity analysis.

According to Wang Yong(2020), the two kinds of analyses are complementary. Transitivity analysis can provide a more detailed analysis of process types and participant functions for ergativity analysis. The ergativity analysis can provide a more general analysis of the subject and causality for transitivity analysis and can distinguish the different forms of the same process type(Liu Ming, 2016). When talking about the relationship between the two modes, Wang Yong(2020) also pointed out that the combination of the two modes in form is complementary. This kind of complementarity has a semantic rationale, that is, when human language expresses two different kinds of situations, namely behaviour and event, it can use two different sets of meaning resources, namely transitivity and ergativity. Each language combines and complements these two resources to varying degrees.

Ziming Liu; Fang Guo & Yi Du

Analysis of two obituaries from the perspectives of transitivity and ergativity

This paper will analyze two obituaries about Queen Elizabeth II through transitivity and ergativity. Then British Prime Minister Truss and the British Royal Family issued obituaries on the death of Queen Elizabeth II. Although both obituaries are about the death of Queen Elizabeth II, there are great differences between the two obituaries. After the transitivity analysis and ergativity analysis of the two obituaries, the author will explain the relationship between transitivity and ergativity.

Here are the two obituaries:

'We are all devastated': PM gives statement outside Downing Street

Prime Minister Liz Truss is giving a statement on the death of the Queen, describing it as a "huge shock to the nation and the world".

"We are all devastated," she tells those gathered outside Downing Street, adding that it is "the passing of the second Elizabethan age".

Ms Truss describes the Queen as the "rock on which modern Britain was built" and the "very spirit of Great Britain".

A STATEMENT FROM HIS MAJESTY THE KING AT THE TIME OF THE QUEEN'S DEATH

The death of my beloved Mother, Her Majesty The Queen, is a moment of the greatest sadness for me and all members of my family.

We mourn profoundly the passing of a cherished Sovereign and a much-loved Mother. I know her loss will be deeply felt throughout the country, the Realms and the Commonwealth, and by countless people around the world.

During this period of mourning and change, my family and I will be comforted and sustained by our knowledge of the respect and deep affection in which The Queen was so widely held.

The obituary issued by the then-British Prime Minister Truss comes first, followed by that of the British Royal Family.

Ziming Liu; Fang Guo & Yi Du

1）Analysis of the obituary issued by the then British Prime Minister Truss

'We are all devastated':

We	are	all devastated
Carrier	Process：relational	Attribute
Medium		Range

PM gives statement outside Downing Street

PM	gives	statement	Outside Downing Street
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance
Agent		Medium	

Prime Minister Liz Truss is giving a statement on the death of the Queen,

Prime Minister Liz Truss	is giving	a statement	on the death of the Queen
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance
Agent		Medium	

describing it as a"huge shock to the nation and the world".

(Prime Minister Liz Truss)	describing	it	as	A "huge shock to the nation and the world"
Sayer	Process: Verbal	Target		Verbiage
Medium				Range

"We are all devastated, "she tells those gathered outside Downing Street,

"We are all devastated"	she	tells	those gathered	outside Downing Street
Verbiage	Sayer	Process: Verbal	Receiver	Circumstance
Range	Medium			

adding that it is"the passing of the second Elizabethan age".

	adding	that it is"the passing of the second Elizabethan age"
	Process: Verbal	Verbiage
		Range

it is "the passing of the second Elizabethan age"

it	is	"the passing of the second Elizabethan age"
Identified, Token	Process: relational, identifying	Identifier, Value
Medium		Agent

Ms Truss describes the Queen as the "rock on which modern Britain was built"and the "very spirit of Great Britain".

Ms Truss	describes	the Queen	as	the "rock on which modern Britain was built"and the "very spirit of Great Britain".
Sayer	Process:	Target		Verbiage
Medium	Verbal			Range

2）Analysis of the obituary issued by the British Royal family

 The death of my beloved Mother, Her Majesty The Queen, is a moment of the greatest sadness for me and all members of my family.

The death of my beloved Mother, Her Majesty The Queen	is	a moment of the greatest sadness	for me and all members of my family.
Identified, Token	Process: relational, identifying	Identifier, Value	Circumstance
Medium		Agent	

We mourn profoundly the passing of a cherished Sovereign and a much-loved Mother.

We	mourn	profoundly the passing of a cherished Sovereign and a much-loved Mother.
Senser	Process: Mental	Phenomenon
Medium		Agent

I know her loss will be deeply felt throughout the country, the Realms and the Commonwealth, and by countless people around the world.

I	know	her loss will be deeply felt throughout the country, the Realms and the Commonwealth, and by countless people around the world.
Senser	Process: Mental	Phenomenon
Medium		Agent

her loss will be deeply felt throughout the country, the Realms and the Commonwealth, and by countless people around the world.

her loss	will be deeply felt	throughout the country, the Realms and the Commonwealth	and by countless people	around the world
Phenomenon	Process: Mental	Circumstance	Senser	Circumstance
Agent			Medium	

During this period of mourning and change, my family and I will be comforted and sustained by our knowledge of the respect and deep affection in which The Queen was so widely held.

During this period of mourning and change	my family and I	will be comforted	and	sustained	by our knowledge	of the respect and deep affection in which The Queen was so widely held
Circumstance	Range Agent	Process: behavioral		Process: behavioral	Behaver Medium	Circumstance

From the perspective of transitivity, the first obituary has two relational processes, two material processes and four verbal processes. The second obituary has one relational process, one behavioural process and three mental processes. From the perspective of ergativity, the first obituary has three ergative sentences and five non-ergative sentences. The second obituary has five ergative sentences and zero non-ergative sentences.

When language represents its experiential function through transitivity, the transitivity system can be subdivided into six processes, namely, material process, mental process, relational process, verbal process, behavioural process and existential process. Along with these processes are associated participants and circumstances. Transitivity analysis includes the type and function of the process, the number of participants and their influence on the process, the classification of circumstances and their effect on the semantic expression of the clause, etc. There is no doubt that the fine division of these processes provides a reliable basis for a more in-depth understanding of the semantics of clauses. Among them, the fineness of participants is more prominent in transitivity analysis. The participant is one of the essential components of the six processes in a transitive system. For a clause, the number of participants can be single or multiple. Participants have different names that correspond to different processes. In both material process clauses of the first obituary, the participants are the Prime Minister and her statements. In the four verbal process clauses of the first obituary, the participants are all PM Truss and her words. In the behavioural process clauses of the second obituary, the participants are knowledge and family. In the three mental processes of the second obituary, the perceivers in the participants are "we, I and the people", and the phenomenon among the participants is the death of

the Queen. In relational process clauses between the two obituaries, participants both touched on the Queen's death. The difference between the two is that the first obituary emphasized the end of an era, while the second one emphasized the death of a mother. So while both obituaries are stylistic and formal, there are differences in perspective. The first obituary is objective, while the second obituary is subjective. This is more obvious from the overall transitivity analysis. The first obituary contains two material process clauses that objectively describe the Prime Minister's announcement of the Queen's death; Two relational process clauses are about the end of the Elizabethan era; The four verbal process clauses objectively show the specific words the prime minister said. One relational process clause in the second obituary is about the impact of the Queen's death on her family; One behavioural process clause is about people's respect and love for the Queen; The three mental process clauses show people's sadness at the Queen's death. The participants in the transitivity analysis fit the themes of their obituaries well. The first obituary, sent by the then British prime minister, Truss, represents the British government and contains fewer direct emotional sentences, so it is more objective. The second obituary, sent by the current King Charles III and representing the British royal family, is more direct and therefore more subjective.

This also reflects the advantages of transitivity analysis: revealing the deep meaning of the text and highlighting the genre style of the text. However, for some texts, transitivity analysis sometimes fails to fully explore the depth of some texts. In this kind of text, as a useful supplement to transitivity analysis, ergativity analysis has greater advantages in exploring the deep connotations of some texts.

As for ergativity, the most basic analysis object of ergativity analysis is semantics. Its semantic feature is "induction of process", and its core semantic components are process and medium. Whether the process is spontaneous or causative is the most common criterion for identifying ergativity. If the process is spontaneous, it is non-ergative. If the process is causative, that is, triggered by external forces, then the process is ergative. The first obituaries used non-ergative clauses to highlight the non-contributory nature of the event and the objectivity of the event and process by stressing that mourning for the Queen was natural. In the second obituary, the clauses are all ergative, which more clearly reflects the British royal family's condolences and regrets for the death of the Queen, and emphasizes that the sad feelings come from people, to highlight the objectivity of the event and process. At the same time, whether the agent appears or not reflects the author's position and point of view in the text. The frequent presence of participants in a certain process can also reflect the attitude and intention of the author. In other words, the author is always consciously relying on the presence or absence of the agent in the ergativity analysis to construct a unique perspective, to achieve his intention. The ergative clauses in both obituaries highlight the agent who expressed sad feelings for the Queen. Non-ergative sentences emphasise that mourning is natural.

The choice of the language user in the ergativity analysis generally serves the information organization of the text but also reflects different textual intentions and perspectives. In the process of text development, it is necessary to maintain the coherence of perspective, which has a certain restriction on the choice of sentence subject in the text. Therefore, the visual coherence of discourse restricts the choice of language users in the ergative system. In the first obituary, the subject of the clause is mostly Prime Minister Truss. The whole text starts with the Prime Minister and objectively expresses her condolences to the Queen. This brings the whole text together in an objective tone. In the second obituary, the subject of the clause is I/we/our family. From the perspective of Charles, the current king of England, the whole text expresses his love for his mother. This brings the whole text together in a kind of subjective tone.

The action or behaviour described by the ergative clause is foreground information, which is the main line of plot development. Non-ergative clauses provide background information for the development of events and play an auxiliary role in the development of the plot. Therefore, the agent of the ergative clause is generally the participant in the events or behaviours involved in the narrative plot and plays a decisive role in the development of the plot. Non-ergative clauses pave the way for the development of the narrative and elicit foreground information. The three ergative clauses in the first obituary are all about the participants in the events or actions involved in the narrative: Prime Minister Truss and the death of the Queen. This is also the main line of the whole text. The remaining five non-ergative clauses refer to what Prime Minister Truss said. These words complement the background of the discourse and assist the development of the plot.

In conclusion, the transitivity analysis and ergativity analysis can further reveal the deep semantic structure of the clause. Transitivity analysis focuses on the extension of the action and makes a precise and detailed analysis of the process, participants and circumstances. Transitivity analysis can reveal the deep meaning of the discourse and help to understand the different cognitive modes and expressions of the experiential world. The ergativity analysis emphasizes the result and state of the process and generalizes the analysis of the clause.

It can also be seen from the above two kinds of analyses that the ergative clause mostly appears with the specific type of transitive clause. In the first obituary, for example, two of the three ergative clauses appear alongside the material process clause. The other one appears with the relational process clause. In the second obituary, three of the five ergative clauses appear alongside the mental process clause. The remaining two appear simultaneously with the material process clause and the relational process clause, respectively. The degree of causality, ergativity and transitivity of a clause determines whether it is suitable for

transitivity analysis or ergativity analysis. Specifically, some processes, such as material and mental processes, are suitable for ergativity analysis because of their high ergative degree. Other processes are more suitable for transitivity analysis. These processes show the difference in the degree of transitivity and ergativity, so they are more suitable for their transitivity analysis or ergativity analysis.

Conclusion

The world experience is very complex, and human language uses many ways to reconstruct the world to express these experiences. According to our needs, we can adopt the appropriate one of transitivity and ergativity for discourse analysis. The two modes have their advantages and are suitable for expressing different situations. Both transitivity analysis and ergativity analysis are grammatical choices of the speaker. The two approaches are not opposed. In some cases, one approach will dominate, but not completely replace the other. In the same language, there may be some differences between the two, but it is not an either-or relationship. Although the two methods are different, they are interrelated, not exclusive to each other and in a complementary relationship. The two analysis methods have different emphases, but there are overlaps. Clauses with different semantically configured structures have different degrees of transitivity and ergativity. Clauses with high transitivity or no causative meaning are more suitable for transitivity analysis, while clauses with a high ergative degree and causative meaning are more suitable for ergativity analysis. This kind of complementarity reflected in the clause is also a reflection of the relationship between transitivity analysis and ergativity analysis.

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Ziming Liu; Fang Guo & Yi Du