

## President Joe Biden's Inaugural Address: A Mood and Transitivity Analysis

*Milma Vinca Cantikka Hidayat<sup>1\*</sup>, Elis Homsini Maolida<sup>2</sup>, Jauhar Helmie<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Suryakencana University

**Abstract.** As an opportunity to promote his ideas and gain public support, Joe Biden, as the president of America conveyed a message of hope and unity in his inaugural address. Taken this as a consideration, this investigation tries to reveal the use of Mood system, Transitivity system as well as to determine the use of both to convey his political intention/message in the address. It is a qualitative research transcription of the speech used as the main source of data. The first finding shows that in total of 280 clauses, 269 data belong to Indicative Mood and 11 data belong to Imperative Mood. In terms of Transitivity, all types appeared in the address with the most dominated process is Material Process. In this case, Material Process as the most dominated Transitivity type, was functioned to portray a new government under his rule and offer answers to the country's issues. Regarding the Mood finding, it was found that Joe Biden frequently used pronoun “we”, “our” and “us” to show that the nation belongs to every person in America.

**Keywords:** Clause Function, Inauguration Address, Joe Biden, Mood System, Transitivity Analysis

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### 1 Introduction

President Biden and Kamala Harris were proclaimed the winners of the 2020 presidential election on November 8, 2020. After it was reported that Biden-Harris had won the election, they were inaugurated and swore in as the 46<sup>th</sup> president and vice president of the United States of America for the next four years, exactly like the previous presidents. The inaugural address, as the first official introduction of a new president, serves extremely persuasive and ideological roles in a country's political landscape [1].

Furthermore, the inaugural address is a defining and significant time for an elected president to offer the first impression to the public through a planned speech that is broadcast internationally [2]. These inaugural addresses would not only symbolize the start of their administrations, but would also provide optimism to the people. According to the Associated Press (AP), President

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\* Corresponding author at: Suryakencana University

E-mail address: milmavincach@gmail.com

Biden's victory came after more than three days of uncertainty as election officials sifted through a surge of mail-in votes that caused some ballots to be delayed. With his victory in Pennsylvania, Biden received more than 270 Electoral College votes. Joe Biden and Kamala Harris were proclaimed the winners of the 2020 presidential election on November 8, 2020.

Most presidents use their inaugural addresses to promote their aspirations for the country and set goals for the state. Each new president views the inaugural address, which is an essential element of the inauguration ceremony, as an occasion to promote his ideas and seek the support of the people, the Americans. All presidents are thoroughly prepared for their inaugural speeches, and each one becomes a legendary [3]. President Biden delivered a strong inauguration address in this example, emphasizing the value of democracy and unity.

Inauguration addresses, like other political public speeches, are typically focused with formal, direct speaking by an addresser to a large number of listeners. Furthermore, it is designed with three broad goals in mind: to inform, convince, and amuse [3]. To be more persuasive, they must not only demonstrate sincerity and complete dedication to their cause, but they must also seem rational, fair, and on the side of good. Accordingly, the use of systemic functional linguistics such as Transitivity and Mood Analysis are essential in revealing the intention of the speaker since they discuss not only the surface of each sentence but also they focus on the context of the speech.

### **Mood System**

Mood is the major interpersonal system of the clause. It provides interactants involved in dialogue with the resources for giving or demanding a commodity, either information or goods and services. In other words, with the resources for enacting speech functions (speech acts) through the grammar of the clause: statements (giving information), questions (demanding information), offers (giving goods and services), and commands (demanding goods and services) [4].

The Mood element is composed by the Subject and the Finite (auxiliary or lexical verb) and the rest of the clause is called as the Residue, determines the Mood of a clause as a verbal group[5]. In English, Mood types are determined by the location of the subject, such as the doer, and the finite employed in the phrase [6]. Gerot and Wignell (1995) argued in [7] that Mood is classified into two types: indicative and urgent. Declarative and interrogative are subcategories of indicative, while exclamative is a subcategory of interrogative.

### **Transitivity Analysis**

Transitivity analysis in particular reveals how the author attributed the agency and process to the various participants in the text, and provides a useful tool that can be based on how the ways in which language constructs reality in terms of how primary and dominant social agents, actors, or groups are categorized, characterized, represented and polarized in discourse. There are three

components of what Halliday calls a “Transitivity Process”, namely: the Process itself, Participants in the Process, and Circumstances associated with the Process. Transitivity system is divided into six types of Process which are Material, Mental, Relational, Behavioural, Verbal, and Existential Process that associate with its participant and circumstance.

The most outstanding types of processes are those involving physical actions: running, jumping, shaking, standing, sitting down and so forth. These are called Material Process. Inevitably, a specific semantic category is created by Mental Processes: there are obvious differences between something going on in the real world and something going on in the inner world of the mind. There are three sub-types of Mental Process specifically perceptive (seeing, smelling, thinking etc.); emotive, or reactive (processes of feeling); cognitive (processes of deciding, knowing, understanding, etc.).

Relational processes are processes of “being”. The English system operates with three main types of relation, they are: intensive (“x is a”), possessive (“x has a”), and circumstantial (“is at a”) (where 'is at' stands for "is at, it, in, on, for, with, about, along, etc). The behavioural processes are on the boundary between 'material' and 'mental': those expressing the external representations of internal workings, the acting out of consciousness processes (e.g. people laugh) and physiological states (e.g. they were sleeping).

On the borderline of ‘Mental’ and ‘Relational’ is the category of Verbal Processes: symbolic relationships constructed in human consciousness and enacted in the form of language, like saying and meaning [4]. The uncertainty between the 'Relational' and the 'Material' is that of the processes concerned with existence, the existential, which the phenomena of all kinds are simply recognized as 'being' – to exist or to happen [4].

The Subject is a well-known concept in classical grammar, although it should be noted that it is being reinterpreted in purposeful terms here [8]. The Subject, which is a nominal group [4], offers a person or thought who had responsibility in the text and is the principal actor of the text. Moreover, Finite is the first functional element of the verbal category – it is most readily understood in the case of yes/no questions, as it is the auxiliary element that appears before the subject [8].

While the Predicator is expressed by the rest of the verbal group apart from the Finite. Meanwhile the Finite is not part of the Predicator. Hence, the Predicator itself is non-finite. Furthermore, Complement is an entity within the Residue that has the right to be Subject but is not; in other words, it is an element that has the ability to be provided the interpersonally increased modal responsibility status, something that may be the main part of the argument [4]. In traditional grammar, it is called ‘Object’. Whilst an Adjunct is an element that has not got the potential of being Subject; that is, it cannot be elevated to the interpersonal status of modal

responsibility [4]. The role of Adjunct is typically performed by an adverbial group or a prepositional phrase [8].

To date, there have been numerous studies relate to Transitivity analysis such as on presidential debate [9] and news report [10]. While previous studies related to Mood analysis such as the last address of the holy prophet [11] and students' recount text [12]. Meanwhile, the author will only present several previous studies that closely related to this research. Those studies and this study have similarities in that they all examined the function of language used by subjects in their speeches and how it might be perceived by subjects' listeners. Nonetheless, this research is quite similar to the first previous research in that both studies examined the function of language in persuading voters by two presidents-elect, but at different times. [2] conducted this study on Donald Trump's inauguration address because he is a controversial president who has caused many people to oppose his ideology because of things he says and his point of view on certain sensitive issues that are rejected by various parties, as well as how the media portrays him as a villain character.

In comparison to the previous studies mentioned above, this research will concentrate on: 1) discussing the Mood system usage in the clauses, 2) identifying the Transitivity processes that were constructed in the speech clauses as well as discovering the most dominated type of Transitivity found in the President Biden inauguration video speech transcription, and 3) explaining the system of Transitivity and Mood in the address. Previous studies have used just one focus in evaluating speeches, but this study includes two, Mood analysis and Transitivity system, to reveal deeper and more comprehensive political messages conveyed in the address.

## **2 Research Methodology**

This is a qualitative research. According to [13] qualitative technique refers to research that provides descriptive data of people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour. Qualitative techniques rely on text and picture data, involve distinct data processing stages, and employ a variety of designs [14]. The qualitative approach is used to gather in-depth information on a given topic [15]. In order to perform this investigation carefully, the author thoroughly researched the research's specific problems. The researcher investigated the research's particular difficulties. To begin, the purpose of this study was to explore the application of the Mood system in clauses. Second, this study was carried out to disclose the Transitivity processes that were built into the speech clauses, as well as to identify the most prevalent form of Transitivity discovered in the President Biden inauguration video speech transcription. Third, the goal of this study was to explain the Transitivity and Mood system that he employs to express his political intention/message.

The qualitative approach's data source might be in the form of spoken or written words. This research's data were mainly gathered from a video transcription of Joe Biden's inaugural

address. Fundamentally, numerous verified news YouTube channels are broadcasting the inaugural event. Nonetheless, The White House YouTube channel is chosen as the author's representation. This channel has 1,9 million YouTube subscribers and 6,8 million Instagram followers. The White House's YouTube channel and Instagram account are both verified. The author obtains the cited data from The White House's website, [www.thewhitehouse.gov](http://www.thewhitehouse.gov).

Data are pieces of evidence or facts gathered in order to address problems. Furthermore, data gathering is a process done to get supporting data. Document analysis is used in this research to address the previously mentioned research topics. Lindsay Prior (2003), as cited in [16] has done significant study on the use of documents in research and says that “documents are, of course, put at the margins of discussion in most social scientific work.” The major source of data for this study is a transcription of President Joe Biden's inauguration address, which was broadcast live from the White House.

### 3 Findings and Discussion

This part expands on the research findings and discussion, concentrating on the Transitivity analysis as well as the different types of Mood structure in President Joe Biden’s inaugural address. The transcript clause interpretation is given in line with the Transitivity and Mood analysis methods. As a result, the analysis is performed at the sentence level. The data is obtained from the speech transcription posted by The White House official website and the commentary of the inaugural address video on YouTube.

#### 3.1 Findings

The following table presents the finding from the first research question related to Mood types found in Joe Biden’s inauguration address.

**Table 1:** Total of Each Types of Mood Found in Joe Biden’s Speech

No	Types of Mood Found in Joe Biden’s Speech			Number
1	Indicative	Declarative	Marked	1
			Unmarked	259
		Interrogative	Polar	8
			Wh- Question	1

2	Imperative	11
Total		280

Based on the table above, in total of 280 clauses, 269 data belong to Indicative Mood and 11 data belong to Imperative Mood. In Indicative Mood type itself, there are 259 clauses classified as Declarative Unmarked Mood, 8 clauses of Declarative Interrogative Polar Mood, and only each of one datum belongs to Declarative Marked Mood and Declarative Interrogative Wh-Question.

**Table 2:** Pronoun Distribution in Inauguration Address of Joe Biden.

No.	Pronoun	Occurrence
1	I	32
2	You	18
3	We	89
4	They	8
5	It	4

The table above shows the distribution pronoun found in Joe Biden inauguration address. As it can be seen that Joe Biden frequently use the pronoun “we” in his speech that occurs for 89 times. While pronoun “it” occurs as the least type of pronoun with only 4 times appearance. On the other hand, the following table will present about the Transitivity processes and its each appearance in the clauses.

**Table 3:** Transitivity Process Frequency

No	Process	Total	Percentage
1	Material Process	193	54,06%
2	Mental Process	63	17,64%
3	Relational Process	50	14,00%
4	Verbal Process	28	7,84%

5	Existential Process	14	3,92%
6	Behavioural Process	9	2,52%
$\Sigma$		<b>357</b>	<b>99,8%</b>

After collecting and analysing the data, the author found out 357 Transitivity processes from 202 clauses contained in the inauguration address of the new president of America, Joe Biden. Based on the Figure 4.1 above, the most dominated process found in the speech is Material Process shown with 54%. Second of all, the Mental Process placed number two with 18%. Followed by Relational Process with 14%. While 8% of the speech belong to Verbal Process. Existential Process has 4% and Last, only 2% of the speech belong to Behavioural Process. Therefore, it can be concluded that Material Process appeared as the most dominated Transitivity process while Behavioural Process was the least.

### 3.2 Discussion

This part elaborates the findings of Mood Block Analysis, Transitivity system, as well as the political messages conveyed in Joe Biden inauguration address based on its transcription which was uploaded by The White House official website and YouTube channel.

#### The Mood Usage Found in President Joe Biden Inauguration Address

This section focuses on the study results discovered in Joe Biden's inauguration address, which focused on Mood structure types. The focus of the discussion will be on the Mood elements: Subject, Finite, Predicator, Complement, and Adjunct.

One of the Declarative Unmarked Mood examples chosen to be represented is “*We can treat each other with dignity and respect.*” The Declarative Mood mentioned before is classified as Unmarked since the order of the sentence represents how usually people construct a simple sentence. This clause contains Subject, Finite that are categorized as Mood block and the rest, Predicator, Complement and Circumstantial Adjunct belong to Residue block. As it can be seen in the mentioned example that Subject (We) represents the participant in that clause or it can be said that “We” here is the doer. Furthermore, the Subject is placed appropriately (before Finite) since it is an assertion rather than a question. While modal “can” functions as the Finite. Hence, “we” and “can” are categorized as the Mood Block in this clause. In this clause, “treat” comes as Predicator, “each other” functions as Complement as it answers question ‘to whom’ and “with dignity and respect” is categorized as Circumstantial Adjunct since it answers question ‘with’.

Another example of Declarative Unmarked Mood is “*Over the centuries through storm and strife, in peace and in war, we have come so far.*” This clause contains Subject, Finite that are categorized as Mood block and the rest, Predicator, Complement and Circumstantial Adjunct belong to Residue block.

“Over the centuries through storm and strife, in peace and in war,” functions as Circumstantial Adjunct since it answers question ‘when’ and ‘how’. Moreover, the Subject (we) represents the participant in that clause or it can be said that “we” here is the doer. Furthermore, the Subject is placed appropriately (before Finite) since it is an assertion rather than a question. While “have” is categorized as Finite. In this clause, “come” comes as Predicator, and “so far” functions as Complement.

In the other hand, the example of Declarative Marked Mood is represented by and “*set our sights on the nation.*” The clause above contains Subject and Finite that are categorized as Mood block. The rest, Complement belongs to Residue block. Moreover, the Finite “set” comes first then followed by Subject “our sights”. This type of Mood is considered as Declarative Marked Mood. Moreover, the complement of this clause is “on the nation” since it answers the question ‘did to what’.

The next example is “*are we going to step up, all of us?*” that chosen as an example of Interrogative Polar Mood. This clause is certainly a polar question that needs an answer ‘yes, I am’ or ‘no, I am not’. Concerning the structures, the Finite “are” that comes first to begin the question and it is followed by the Subject “we”. The next is “going to step” functions as a Predicator and “up,” functions as Circumstantial Adjunct since it answers question ‘where’. Lastly, this clause is closed by complement “all of us” which answers the question ‘to whom’.

“*What are the common objects*” is taken as an example of Interrogative Wh- Mood. This utterance is an example of an interrogative clause, specifically a Wh-question. It is a Wh-question because it needs content answers, not only merely yes or no answer. Moreover, this question is also started by Wh-question of “What” which also functions as Complement/Wh. For the words “are” and “the common objects” own the positions of a Finite and a Subject.

One of the examples of Imperative Mood is “*Take a measure of me and my heart.*” This chosen utterance is a command that Joe Biden gave to the Americans which was realised in Imperative Mood. To be more detailed, “a measure” is the Subject and “take” is a Finite which included to Mood block. While “me and my heart” is considered as a Complement which is included to Residue block.

### **Transitivity System and Its Process Frequency Found in President Joe Biden’s Inauguration address**



Each clause of the English text was categorized into three elements of Transitivity system. They are Process Types, Participant Functions, and Circumstantial Elements. The Process Types were classified into Material Process, Mental Process, Relational Process, Behavioural Process, Existential Process, and Verbal Process. The function of Participant was related to the Process Types. The existence of Circumstance in a clause is optional.

### **Material Process**

One of the taken instances is “*The world is watching today.*” As it can be seen from the example mentioned earlier, “The world” functions as an Actor or the one who does the action. The Material Process of this clause belongs to “is watching”. Finally, this clause is closed by Circumstantial location of time, “today”.

The second example is “*And together, we shall write an American story of hope, not fear.*” This clause is said nearly to the end of his speech. In this clause, he encouraged the Americans to continue giving the best for their country lead by him. In the example above, the first participant is shown by the Actor “we” who does the Material Process “shall write”. While the second participant which is the Goal, or something that is affected by the Actor here is “an American story of hope, not fear.”

### **Mental Process**

“*I understand that many Americans view future with some fear and trepidation.*” is one of Mental Process examples to be discussed. The clause before shows an example of Mental Process of cognition since “understand”, which is the process of this clause requires a process of thinking. The Senser or what we call subject but in the form of Mental Process here is “I”.

The second example is “*And, devoted to one another and to this country we love with all our hearts.*” He said this after he finished his whole inauguration speech and gave her hope that America is always under the guidance of God. As it is clearly stated in the example, that this clause represents Mental Process of affection. The word “love” shows the way of feeling. Therefore, it categorized into Mental Process of affection. Moreover, there are two participants of this clause the first is “we” that functions as Senser and “with all of our hearts” that functions as Phenomenon.

### **Relational Process**

For instance, “*This is a great nation and we are a good people.*” In this Relational Process, “this” has a function as a Carrier that is also be a Subject of the clause. While “a great nation” has a role as Attribute since it explains how is the nation which refers to the Carrier itself.

The second instance is “*Democracy is fragile*”. As he began his speech, he several times mentioned what is democracy based on his perspective. As it is stated before, “Democracy” holds something to be explained. Therefore, it functions as a Carrier. However, “fragile” is the

Attribute which holds the explanation of the Carrier. This clause clarifies that the Attribute here describes the Carrier.

### **Behavioural Process**

The Behavioural processes are on the boundary between 'Material' and 'Mental': those expressing the external representations of internal workings, the acting out of consciousness processes (e.g. people laugh) and biological states (e.g. she was sleeping). One of Behavioural process example is “*Through the Civil War, the Great Depression, World War, 9/11 through our “better angels” have always prevailed.*”

The clause is started with Circumstantial of Manner which is “*Through the Civil War, the Great Depression, World War, 9/11, through struggle, sacrifice, and setbacks,*”. The Behavior of the clause is “*our “better angels”*”. By using the group of verbs “*have always prevailed*” this clause shows that the democracy and the unity of American people have always conquered.

### **Verbal Process**

The first example of Verbal Process “*As does President Carter, who I spoke to last night*” is an example to represent the Verbal Process. Based on the example mentioned before, it is clearly stated that this clause has only one participant, which is “I” who functions as a Sayer. The Verbal Process of this clause is “spoke” since it requires a conscious act of speaking and meaning.

The second example is “*I know speaking of unity can sound like a foolish fantasy.*” The example before states that the Verbal Process of the clause is “sound” since it requires a process of saying or symbolically signalling. However, the Verbiage or the content of what is being discussed in this clause is “to some like a foolish fantasy.”

### **Existential Process**

One of the Existential Process is “*There are other days when we’re called on to lend one.*” As it is stated in the example before, ‘there’ actually has no experiential meaning. Thus, the author left a blank space below it. However, “other days” functions as the Existent.

The next example is “*There is truth....*” which he said before he mentioned the things that made the Americans worry then he emphasized why lies are told and how should a leader deal with it. In this example, the word “there” is shown and it makes the clause categorizes as a Relational Process. The auxiliary verb “is” marks as the Process of Existential itself. While “truth” functions as the Existent.

### **The Function Analysis Found in President Joe Biden’s Inauguration Address Based on the Mood and Transitivity Analysis**

This part consists of the explanation of how President Joe Biden conveys his political messages through his inaugural address. This address was significant because, like other political

addresses, it was distinguished by the range of tactics used to convey ideas and guarantee that listeners had a better knowledge of political views.

### **Mood System Function**

#### **Indicative Mood in Joe Biden Inauguration address**

The following is example selected from Joe Biden's inauguration address:

*Here we stand, in the shadow of a Capitol dome that was completed amid the Civil War, when the Union itself hung in the balance.*

*Yet we endured and we prevailed.*

From the example above, it can be said that the latest President of United State of America tries to give the audiences an understanding and information that America is better than what people think this whole time. He also tried to convey his political message by giving a situation that when the balance of the union is tested, they successfully survived and prevailed. Hence, this clause is categorized as an Intensive Declarative Mood type.

#### **Imperative Mood in Joe Biden Inauguration address**

The following clauses show a number of Imperative Mood examples and its functions stated in Joe Biden inauguration address.

*And so today, at this time and in this place, let us start afresh.*

*All of us.*

*Let us listen to one another.*

*Hear one another.*

*See one another.*

*Show respect to one another.*

In the example above, Joe Biden tries to persuade people since he uses the word "let us". He also tries to unite the people and encourage them to listen, hear, see and give respect to one another after he mentions about America's constant struggle between America's ideal. Leaders frequently employ persuasive imperatives to persuade their audiences to follow their direction. Hence, this clause is categorized as Imperative Mood type with persuading people function.

### **Transitivity System Function**

#### **Material Process Function**

There are two functions of Material Process found in the President Joe Biden inauguration address namely, portraying a new government under his rule and offering answers to the country's issues. The following clauses represent the example of Material Process function.

*Today, we mark the swearing-in of the first woman in American history elected to national office – Vice President Kamala Harris.*

The example above represents portraying a new government under his rule function. Introducing the team to the public means that the President cannot work alone to achieve the goals of the nation. This also to persuade people to support the government to work hand in hand together.

### **Mental Process Function**

There are two functions of Mental Process clause in inauguration address. The first is expressing dispositions and political beliefs and the second is encouraging citizens to participate in nation-building. The following clauses are the example of each function.

*That's democracy.*

*That's America.*

*The right to dissent peaceably, within the guardrails of our Republic, is perhaps our nation's greatest strength.*

The first function is expressing dispositions and political beliefs. Problems left by the former administration are believed to be inherited by the incoming government in every successful change of government leadership. Therefore, in this case, President Joe Biden tries to express it by mentioning democracy and unity in his inauguration address a couple of time.

### **Relational Process**

The function of Relational Process is to define the difficulties that the government faces as it will be shown in the following example.

*Our history has been a constant struggle between the American ideal that we are all created equal and the harsh, ugly reality that racism, nativism, fear, and demonization have long torn us apart.*

In order to successfully persuade the citizen, the President have to define the problems that are faced by the nation nowadays based on the status quo.

### **Verbal Process Function**

The next process of Transitivity is Verbal Process which has a function to take a pledge to serve the people and lead the battle for change. The following clause represents the example

*And I pledge this to you: I will be a President for all Americans.*

*I will fight as hard for those who did not support me as for those who did.*

From the example above, it can be noticed that the president of America uses a pronoun “I” which leads him to be the main participant or Sayer of this clause. He conveys his message to the public so that they can help the president address through specific agenda in his inauguration address.

### **Existential Process Function**

Following the Behavioural Process, the Existential Process was one of the least common process categories in this research. The existential process, as one that embodies existence and events, was used by the President of America in his inaugural addresses to emphasize their rise to power, highlighting the inauguration as a symbolic chance for change. For instance:

*This is our historic moment of crisis and challenge, and unity is the path forward.*

### **Behavioural Process Function**

The behavioural process was utilized sparingly in the studied inauguration addresses, as it was the least common process type. In reality, some speakers did not often illustrate their behaviour.

*We have never, ever, ever failed in America when we have acted together.*

## **4 Conclusion**

This study has solved the research questions posed previously, by gathering data from the transcription of official YouTube channel and website of The White House government, it is found that there are a total of 280 clauses, 269 of which are in the Indicative Mood and 11 of which are in the Imperative Mood. There are 259 clauses of the Indicative Mood type that are Declarative Unmarked Mood, 8 clauses that are Declarative Interrogative Polar Mood, and just one datum that is Declarative Marked Mood and Declarative Interrogative Wh- Question. Six processes were discovered using Transitivity analysis found in the transcription. These are the Material Process, the Mental Process, the Relational Process, the Behavioural Process, the Existential Process, and the Verbal Process. The most dominated type of Transitivity is Material Process shown with 54%.

The function of the clause was analysed by Mood and Transitivity perspective. Based on the data analysed by Mood system, Joe Biden frequently used pronoun “we”, “our” and “us” to show that the nation belongs to every person in America. By using Transitivity analysis which dominated by Material Process turns the inauguration address of Joe Biden into an information source provider of the American condition that also has a function to persuade the Americans to work together.

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