

# Reflections on the Nature of Transitivity: With Reference to Focus and Discourse Pragmatics

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Transitivity refers to the transit or transfer of the action and its consequences to another participant: the goal/affected/patient. In its broader sense transitivity refers to structural function which may be said to be componential. In both definitions, transitivity is concerned with actions or processes and the associated participants.

Transitivity and Focus in the universal sense, as expounded by the Prague School and Halliday, are to be found at play in the linguistic systems of Tagalog and English--as presumably in all language types. Both are realized by the Syntax--and here lie the differences.

Halliday (1967-68) asserts that in the linguistic system, there is a self-contained set of interrelated systems: transitivity, mood, and theme. As the system of role relationships and the nature of such relationships, transitivity belongs to what Halliday refers to as the "ideational component" of the linguistic system; it is the grammar of processes. This is the "experiential component" in the clause. (Mood is the grammar of speech functions, roles adopted by the speaker and assigned to the hearer--the "interpersonal component" and Theme is the grammar of messages, the status of the clause and its parts as units of communication--the textual component of clause structure or functional sentence perspective [FSP].)

Transitivity rests in the "verbal word"--the predicate verb. With the predicate verbal word being syntactically nominal in a language with a topic-focus system, the different ways in which the interplay of the interrelated systems of transitivity, mood, and theme in the pragmatics of discourse in such a language type will be addressed.

Transitivity as the "ideational component" of a linguistic system is functional in languages with topic-focus grammar. However, in a language of this type, it is mainly the "textual component" that shapes the syntax and drives the discourse.