TRANSITIVITY PROCESSES IN SABRINA CARPENTER'S SONGS "ESPRESSO" AND "PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE"

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Abstract

Music plays a crucial role in shaping some people's daily activities, influencing mood, productivity, and social interactions. These roles of music in day-to-day life influence music charts to fluctuate, making achieving the number one spot on charts like BILLBOARD HOT 100TM a crucial milestone in a singer's career, symbolizing widespread popularity and success. This is what happened to Sabrina Carpenter's music career. Her popularity has rocketed in her upcoming new album, Short 'n Sweet. With "ESPRESSO" and "PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE" reaching the top five spots on the BILLBOARD HOT 100TM, people began to wonder why they were so successful. This study aimed to identify and analyze the different types of transitivity processes present in songs, and to explore how these processes contribute to conveying themes and emotions in the lyrics. The data revealed the presence of all six processes (material, mental, relational, behavioral, existential, and verbal) within these songs. Based on the data, the verbal processes were the most dominant in the two songs that were analyzed which occurred 45 times in total or for about 30.41% of the total 148 occurrences. It suggested a heavy reliance on communication and dialogue, which indicated the songs emphasized conversations, declarations, or expressions of thought through speech, reflecting the lyrical style where the artist might be storytelling or conveying messages directly to the audience. Future studies on Sabrina Carpenter's music could explore her discography to examine how transitivity patterns vary across albums. Comparative analyses with other pop artists could highlight genre-specific trends in transitivity usage.

Keywords: *Sabrina Carpenter, Song Lyrics, Espresso, Please, Transitivity Analysis*

Introduction

Music plays a crucial role in shaping some people's daily activities, influencing mood, productivity, and social interactions. Upbeat and rhythmic music can boost motivation and performance during physical exercises by providing a tempo to synchronize movements and reducing perceived effort. In work or study environments, background music, notably instrumental or classical genres, can improve concentration and cognitive function by creating an ambient atmosphere that minimizes distractions. Music also enriches social experiences by acting as a catalyst for social bonding at gatherings and events. It sets the tone and facilitates shared emotional experiences. Furthermore, music accompanies routines such as commuting or household chores, transforming mundane tasks into enjoyable and engaging activities. The omnipresence of music in everyday life underscores its power to influence our emotional states, behavior, and social connections, making it an integral part of the human experience.

These roles of music in day-to-day life influence music charts to fluctuate, making achieving the number one spot on charts like BILLBOARD HOT 100TM a crucial milestone in a singer's career, symbolizing widespread popularity and success. This is what happened to

Sabrina Carpenter's music career. Her popularity has rocketed in her upcoming new album, Short 'n Sweet. The first single from this album, "ESPRESSO" charted 3rd on the BILLBOARD HOT 100TM for 10 weeks since it was first released on April 27, 2024 (Sabrina Carpenter | Biography, Music & News | Billboard, n.d). This song was a surprise release for the fans and others since both the song and music video were dropped a day before Carpenter's performance at the Coachella Festival 2024. As reported in Time.com (2024), "The video has gained over 14 million views on YouTube and "Espresso" peaked at No. 7 on the Billboard Hot 100 (only to be dethroned by Taylor Swift) and is No. 5 on Spotify's Viral 50 U.S.A. chart." This successful release is followed by the second single, "PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE," which received an overwhelming response by topping the BILLBOARD HOT 100TM in its first week. As commented by Lipshutz (Claxton et al., 2024), this song is the song that cemented Carpenter's career as an A-list pop artist.

After these two songs reached the top five spots on the HOT 100TM, people began to wonder why they were so successful. According to Jackie Winkler, an A&R at Island Records, Sabrina created music that reflects who she is as a person. Her unique quirks and character are what give her such a strong musical identity (Rys, 2024). Moreover, the lyrics of "ESPRESSO" have been recognized for their captivating nature and have contributed to the song's virality as a popular meme with lines such as "That's that me espresso" and "I'm working late, cause I'm a singer" (Mendez, 2024). While the song "Please Please Please" landed high in the chart, the discussion on its lyrics is still minimal. Because of that, this study focuses on what type of transitivity processes are present in the songs. The study also discusses how these processes reflect the theme and emotions in the lyrics.

Theoretical Review
Transitivity Theories

Understanding transitivity, as outlined in Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, is crucial for grasping how language conveys complex human experiences. This framework captures the intricacies of human communication (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Fontaine (2013) highlights its critical role in representing complex experiences, while Thompson (2014) explores the system's flexibility in allowing speakers to express diverse perspectives and intentions. Verbal phrases, or predicators, within a clause, are central to depicting these transitivity processes and engaging participants effectively (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Halliday categorizes these processes into six types—material, mental, verbal, behavioral, relational, and existential: offering a robust framework for analyzing language and communication.

Material processes, essential in Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, are processes that involve performing physical or tangible actions. These actions are identified through the analysis of two main participants: the actor and the goal. The actor is an entity that acts on an action, while the goal is the person or entity affected by this action. For instance, in the sentence "The child sings a happy song," the child is the actor, and a happy song is the goal. To identify a material process, one can simply ask, "What did X do?" This question helps pinpoint the action and the participants involved, making it easier to distinguish material processes from other types of processes. The emphasis on tangible actions in this framework effectively captures the dynamic interactions between the participants, providing a clear understanding of who is doing what to whom. This analytical approach not only highlights the physical activities but also reveals the underlying structure of action and impact within a sentence. By dissecting these interactions, material processes offer valuable insights into the way language represents the physical world and its activities.

Mental processes in Halliday's framework focus on perceptions, thoughts, and feelings, converting them into mental reactions that express internal human experiences (Kristiano,

2021). These processes can be examined by asking, "What do you think/feel/know about X?" The two key participants in mental processes are the Senser, the conscious being experiencing the mental activity and the phenomenon, the object of the Senser's experience. Gerot and Wignell (1995, p.58) classify mental processes into three categories: perceptive (sensing, hearing, tasting), affective (feeling, loving, liking), and cognitive (thinking, believing, understanding). This classification underscores the varied ways in which internal experiences are processed and expressed through language.

Relational processes in Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar define relationships through identification and attribution, essential for connecting and attributing qualities in language. These processes, articulated through verbs like "is, am, are, was, were, have been, seem, become, weigh, cost," establish roles where Token and Value play crucial roles. Nominal groups exemplify both token and value, illustrating the reversibility of identification processes (Prasetyo, Situmorang, & Hutabarat, 2023). For example, "Luna was the most beautiful girl in this school" can be reversed to "The most beautiful girl in this school is Luna." Attribution, in contrast, assigns characteristics to the Carrier and the Attribute, typically with nominal groups or nouns, emphasizing their non-reversible nature and their role in defining qualities (Prasetyo, Situmorang, & Hutabarat, 2023). These processes enrich language by clearly defining relationships and attributes.

In Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, communication through spoken language falls under the Verbal process in transitivity, serving as a pivotal link between mental and relational processes (Thompson, 2004). This process involves three primary participants: the Sayer, the Receiver, and the Verbiage (Mehmood et al., 2014, p.81). The Sayer is the one who initiates the communication. The Receiver is the intended recipient of the message, and the Verbiage, that encapsulates the statement conveyed. Additionally, there is a fourth participant, the Target, who represents the subject of the communicated message. According to Zhao and Zhang (2017, p.34), the Receiver is the individual directly addressed by the statement, while the Target is the entity being referred to.

Behavioral processes in Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar combine elements of both material and mental processes, focusing on the outward expression of internal activities. These processes, characterized by observable actions like breathing, smiling, and listening, are essential for understanding physiological and psychological behaviors. Behavioral processes in Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar blend features of material and mental processes, emphasizing the external manifestation of internal actions. These processes encompass a range of behaviors such as breathing, dreaming, smiling, and listening, reflecting both psychological and physiological activities (Gerot and Wignell, 1994, p.60). Unlike other processes, behavioral processes typically involve a single participant known as the Behaver, who engages consciously in actions rather than purely sensing.

Existential processes in Halliday's framework denote states of being, existence, or occurrence through verbs like 'be' and its synonyms. These processes, characterized by their use of 'there is/are' structures, are distinct from Relational and Material processes, focusing solely on the existence or occurrence of entities. In Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, Existential processes articulate states of existence, being, or occurrence through verbs such as 'be,' 'exist,' 'arise,' and 'occur.' These processes uniquely involve a single participant referred to as the Existent, which follows the 'there is/are' sequence in their expression. Unlike Relational and Material processes, which establish relationships or actions, existential processes concentrate solely on the presence or occurrence of entities within discourse.

Studies of Transitivity in Song Lyrics

Some studies also discussed transitivity in song lyrics. Harbi et al., (2019) focused on the transitivity process in some of The Beatle's popular songs. The analysis of ten popular

songs showed that the material processes were the most prominent. This suggests that the Beatles utilized this process to effectively communicate physical and tangible actions derived from their own experiences. Siahaan (2021) discovered Bon Jovi applied the six types of transitivity processes. Bon Jovi's seleczhated song lyrics predominantly use the material process out of the six transitivity processes. This indicates a focus on physical activities within social phenomena. Mulyati (2022) analyzed the transitivity elements and conceptual meaning present in the lyrics of three songs from Alan Walker's "Different World" album: "Faded," "Alone," and "Lily." The findings revealed a high frequency of relational processes in these songs. The conceptual meaning behind the lyrics demonstrated a focus on the process of being or having, which reflects the experiences in the artist's relationships.

Methodology

The first step in collecting the data was writing down the lyrics of "ESPRESSO" and "PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE", which were found on Genius.com. In the process of song selection, priority was given to the personal preferences and songs that had charted on the Billboard Hot 100TM. Next, an analysis of primary data involving clauses with verbs that realize transitivity was conducted. A table to outline the six processes employed, focusing on identifying transitivity processes within Sabrina Carpenter's song lyrics. The table served as a means to document the frequency of transitivity processes and examine predominant process types in each song.

Findings and Discussion
Findings

The analysis of song lyrics allowed for the identification and quantification of transitivity processes, with the resulting data meticulously presented in Table 1. The data showed the occurrences and percentage of each type of transitivity process. This analysis revealed the presence of all six processes (material, mental, relational, behavioral, existential, and verbal) within Sabrina Carpenter's selected songs.

Table 1. Total Occurrences and Percentage of Types of Transitivity Processes

TYPES OF TRANSITIVITY PROCESSES	TOTAL OCCURRENCES OF PROCESSES	PERCENTAGE
Mental	27	18,24%
Material	34	22,97%
Relational	22	14,86%
Behavioral	14	9,46%
Existential	6	4,05%
Verbal	45	30,41%
TOTAL	**148**	**100%**

Based on the data, the verbal process is the most dominant in the two songs that were analyzed. The data shows that verbal processes occurred 45 times in total, which accounts for about 30.41% of the total 148 occurrences. Material processes are the second most dominant, occurring 34 times, which is approximately 22.97% of the total processes. In third place, mental processes dominate the occurrences 27 times, making up about 18.24% of all processes.

Relational processes come in fourth place with 22 occurrences, accounting for around 14.86% of the total occurrences. The remaining processes occur 14 times, making up about 9.46% of occurrences for behavioral, and existential processes occur 6 times, representing around 4.05% of total occurrences.

To provide a detailed analysis, Tables 2 and 3 present the frequency of transitivity processes for each song. Table 2 specifically outlines the occurrences and percentage distribution of the "ESPRESSO" song. It is pertinent to note that there were a total of 72 occurrences. Material processes emerged as the most prevalent, constituting 29.2% or 21 occurrences. Subsequently, mental processes were observed 20 times, accounting for 27.8%. The remaining processes manifested as follows: behavioral processes with 11 instances (15.3%), relational processes with 9 occurrences (approximately 12.5%), verbal processes occurring 6 times (8.3%), and existential processes taking place 5 times (approximately 6.9%).

Table 2. Occurrences and Percentage of Types of Transitivity Processes on Sabrina Carpenter's "ESPRESSO"

Types of Transitivity Processes	Occurrences of Processes	Percentage (%)
Mental	20	27,8%
Material	21	29,2%
Relational	9	12,5%
Behavioral	11	15,3%
Existential	5	6,9%
Verbal	6	8,3%
TOTAL	**72**	**100%**

The data presented in Table 3 illustrates the distribution of processes employed in the song "PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE." In the initial release, "PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE," verbal processes predominate, accounting for 39 instances, constituting approximately 51.3% of all processes within the song. Material and relational processes jointly occupy the second position with 13 occurrences each, representing approximately 17.1% of the total. Furthermore, mental processes manifest 7 times, corresponding to 9.2%, while behavioral processes are evident 3 times, approximately 3.9%. Existential processes are observed once, equating to around 1.3%.

Table 3. Types of Transitivity Processes Occurrences and Percentage on Sabrina Carpenter's "PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE"

Types of Transitivity Processes	Occurrences of Processes	Percentage (%)
Mental	7	9,2%
Material	13	17,1%
Relational	13	17,1%
Behavioral	3	3,9%
Existential	1	1,3%
Verbal	39	51,3%
TOTAL	**76**	**100%**

Discussion

In the analysis of the two songs, verbal processes are identified as the most dominant, suggesting a heavy reliance on communication and dialogue. This indicates that the songs emphasize conversations, declarations, or expressions of thought through speech, reflecting the lyrical style where the artist might be storytelling or conveying messages directly to the audience. Material processes, the second most frequent, involve actions and physical activities, suggesting the songs focus on dynamic events and actions. This emphasis on material processes contributes to a vivid and engaging storyline, drawing the listener into the scenarios being described.

The diverse use of mental, relational, behavioral, and existential processes in the analyzed songs enriches the lyrics by combining introspection, contextual relationships, and occasional references to physical actions and states of existence, ultimately creating a multifaceted and emotionally resonant narrative. Mental processes rank third in frequency, highlighting introspective and emotional aspects by delving into the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the subjects. This focus adds depth, offering insights into the psychological and emotional states of the characters or narrator. Relational processes, while less frequent, play a significant role in defining states of being and relationships, providing context and connection. Behavioral and existential processes are the least common, indicating occasional references to bodily actions or states of existence. The varied use of these processes showcases the songs' blend of communication, action, introspection, and contextual relationships, creating a rich and multifaceted lyrical narrative.

The distribution of transitivity processes in the "ESPRESSO" song reveals a multifaceted approach to storytelling. The dominance of material and mental processes suggests a balanced focus on external actions and internal experiences, creating a rich and engaging narrative. Behavioral processes add authenticity and relatability, while relational processes provide context and depth. Verbal and existential processes, though less frequent, contribute to the expressive and reflective dimensions of the song. By employing a variety of transitivity processes, the "ESPRESSO" song effectively captures a wide range of human experiences, making it both dynamic and emotionally resonant. This analysis underscores the song's ability to convey complex narratives and emotions through its linguistic structure, enhancing its overall impact on listeners.

The predominance of verbal processes in "PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE" underscores the centrality of communication and dialogue in the song's narrative. This focus on verbal interactions suggests that the lyrics involve significant storytelling, conversations, and expressions of thought, effectively engaging the listener and conveying the artist's message. The strong connection between the performer and the audience created by this emphasis on verbal processes makes the song more relatable and impactful. The equal prominence of material and relational processes indicates a balance between describing actions and establishing relationships or attributes, contributing to a dynamic and vivid narrative. Mental processes, though less frequent, add an introspective and emotional layer by exploring the thoughts and feelings of the subjects. Behavioral processes, while not as dominant, introduce realism through references to physiological and psychological behaviors. The occasional use of existential processes adds a contemplative dimension. Together, these varied linguistic processes showcase the song's multifaceted approach to storytelling, creating a rich and emotionally resonant narrative that captures a wide range of human experiences and enhances the song's overall impact.

Conclusion

Based on the comprehensive analysis of transitivity processes in the analyzed songs, it is evident that verbal processes play a pivotal role in both "ESPRESSO" and "PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE," serving as the dominant mode of communication. This emphasis on verbal interactions underscores the songs' narrative strengths in storytelling, dialogue, and direct expression of ideas, enhancing their ability to engage listeners on a personal and emotive level. Material and relational processes complement this narrative framework by adding layers of action, context, and relational depth, thereby enriching the songs' vivid portrayal of events and relationships. Meanwhile, the inclusion of mental processes provides introspective insights into the characters' thoughts and emotions, contributing to a deeper understanding of their psychological states.

Furthermore, the varied use of behavioral and existential processes, albeit less frequent, adds authenticity and contemplative dimensions to the lyrical narratives. These elements collectively highlight the songs' multifaceted storytelling approaches, where each type of process contributes uniquely to the overall thematic coherence and emotional resonance. By blending communication, action, introspection, and contextual relationships, both songs effectively capture a broad spectrum of human experiences, demonstrating their ability to evoke profound emotional responses and resonate deeply with their audiences. Overall, the analysis illustrates how the strategic deployment of different transitivity processes shapes the narrative complexities of "ESPRESSO" and "PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE," reinforcing their impact and appeal through diverse linguistic expressions.

Future studies on Sabrina Carpenter's music could explore her discography to examine how transitivity patterns vary across albums. Comparative analyses with other pop artists could highlight genre-specific trends in transitivity usage. Exploring collaborative works could offer insights into the dynamics of creative partnerships in music production. Additionally, expanding transitivity analysis to diverse genres such as rock, hip-hop, country, and indie music could uncover unique storytelling techniques and emotional resonances specific to each genre. Cultural and linguistic perspectives could enrich this exploration by examining transitivity in songs across languages and cultural contexts.

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