



Transitivity Process on Song Lyrics in Ariana Grande's Album 'thank u, next'

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Abstract

People listen to music a lot nowadays due to the emotional connections it creates. Moreover, music, especially songs, can be a convenient and enjoyable form of entertainment and expression in people's daily lives. This study focused on one of the subdiscipline of discourse analysis, namely transitivity. The analysis of transitivity in this study is using the theory of Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) that transitivity process consists of 6 processes: material process, mental process, relational process, behavioral process, verbal process and existential process. The source of data is based on Ariana Grande's album "thank u, next" and taking its song lyrics to be explored. The study results show that the material process consists of ninety-nine clauses; the mental process consists of two hundred forty-one clauses; the relational process consists of fifty-one clauses; the behavioral process consists of seventy-five clauses; the verbal process consist of forty-one clauses; and the existential process consist of two clauses. So, it can be concluded the total clauses existing in this album are five hundred and eight clauses.

Keywords: *Ariana Grande; song lyrics; transitivity process*

Introduction

Some songs have clear and straightforward meanings, while others are more open to interpretation and may have more profound or abstract meanings. When listening to a song, one can interpret it in different ways. The lyrics and music together can express feelings, stories, or thoughts about various topics, such as love, social issues, personal experiences, or politics. The songwriter's intention shapes the song's meaning.

Various factors, such as cultural, historical, and personal contexts, can shape the interpretation of a song. How listeners perceive and understand the meaning of a song can be unique to each individual, depending on their own experiences,

beliefs, and perspectives. This means that what one person takes away from a song may not necessarily be the same as what another person interprets. The context in which a song is heard can significantly influence how we understand and relate to its lyrics and melody.

It is widely acknowledged that language plays a crucial role in creating song lyrics. This is because language is considered an effective medium for conveying information (Riandini, 2024). The choice of words, phrasing, and overall lyric structure are crucial in creating impactful and unforgettable song lyrics, as they significantly affect the listener's understanding and emotional response.

Music impacts our well-being. It's linked to our emotions, memories, and social roles. By recognizing its ecological materiality, we can understand how it shapes our environment and influences our health (DeNora, 2013). Furthermore, from (Hesmondhalgh, 2013), stated that, music is a universal language that connects experiences, evokes emotions, and transports us to different times and places.

Ariana Grande, a singer and songwriter, is widely known for her successful music career. Her powerful vocals, impressive vocal range, and catchy pop hits have made her famous. Born on June 26, 1993, in Boca Raton, Florida, Ariana Grande is an American singer, songwriter, and actress. In 2013, she released her debut album called "Yours Truly," which featured "The Way," a hit single. Grande's music usually combines elements of pop, R&B, and soul.

Some of her other well-known songs include "Problem," "Bang Bang," "Side to Side," and "Thank U, Next." She has won several awards, including Grammy Awards and Billboard Music Awards, and has a massive, global fan base. Ariana Grande has been the subject of much media attention regarding her personal life. She has been in the public eye for her relationships, activism, and overall image. Additionally, Grande has been involved in several charitable causes and has used her platform to raise awareness for important social justice issues.

Ariana Grande's album "thank u, next" explores the intricacies of romantic and sexual relationships, mirroring the experiences of the millennial generation. What makes the album unique is the way it imbues each song with a feeling of self-empowerment and self-validation while at the same time acknowledging the hurt that comes with heartbreak. Grande's music is both comforting and innovative, with infectious beats and memorable melodies that convey her authentic emotions and her experiences with trauma. The result is a powerful, inspiring, stunning album that resonates with listeners worldwide (Kameir, 2019).

Discourse analysis studies language in social contexts, examining how it constructs meaning, social identities, power relations, and practices. According to (Adedun & Sekyi, 2014), discourse analysis studies language, communication, and

social interactions, including their cultural contexts, power dynamics, and societal effects. Besides that, from (Johnstone, 2018), stated that discourse analysis helps study language structure, meanings, and social practices. It provides insights into linguistic and social aspects of language use.

Transitivity is a linguistic system that determines the structure and meaning of sentences. Transitivity classifies verbs and clauses based on their relationship to other sentence elements. Transitive verbs need an object, while intransitive ones do not. It helps us understand how verbs relate to participants and circumstances in a clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). While (Thompson, 2014) stated that transitivity analysis identifies grammatical metaphors through subject, verb, and object relationships. A metaphor is likely present if the verb does not usually match the subject and object.

The writer found a previous study with the same topic but with a different source of data. The title is 'Transitivity Analysis of Taylor Swift's Lyrics in *Midnights* Album' by (Max, Vivian, Putra, & Kuncara, 2023). Using Halliday's transitivity framework and Simpson's stylistic approach to lyrics, an analysis has been conducted on the album "Midnights" by Taylor Swift. Through this study, it has been discovered that the songs in the album possess three dominant processes that contribute to the overall meaning of the album. These processes shed light on the songwriter's perspective on various subjects such as love, relationships, self-contempt, and revenge. This research can be helpful for those who are interested in exploring popular culture texts and improving their English language skills.

Based on the previous study above, the writer discussed the types of processes and the dominant types of processes. This research mainly focuses on analyzing and discussing the different types of procedures evident in the musical compositions present in Ariana Grande's album "thank u, next".

Method

The writer uses qualitative research techniques to explore the linguistic and contextual aspects of the album's song lyrics, providing a nuanced understanding of the themes and messages conveyed through the music. Qualitative research interprets subjective experiences and meanings, exploring cultural contexts that influence social phenomena (Creswell, 2013).

An extensive dataset of Ariana Grande's lyrical content from the album "Thank U, Next" will be used in this study. The album was released in 2019, and this dataset will be the primary textual material for the research study. In-depth analysis of this comprehensive dataset will be a critical aspect of the research process to uncover insightful findings. The usage of this dataset is anticipated to provide a complete comprehension of the themes and messages conveyed through the lyrics of this album.

The writer gathered data by studying the 'thank u, next' album by Ariana Grande. As the writer followed a specific method to collect the data from the lyrics, such as: collecting accurate "thank u, next" album lyrics from trustworthy sources like Genius.com, ensuring accurate lyrics by comparing multiple sources and correcting discrepancies. According to the analysis, the writer utilized a specific method to scrutinize the lyrics of Ariana Grande's album 'thank u, next' in the following manner: identify each type of transitivity process in the song lyrics from 'thank u, next' album."

Results & Discussion

Based on the theory from (Halliday & Matthiessen, Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar Fourth Edition, 2014), there are six types of process in transitivity. There are material processes, mental processes, relational processes, behavioral processes, verbal processes, and existential processes. In this study, the writer will discuss one-by-one each type of process.

Material Process

The present tense is commonly used to describe material processes, indicating that an action is taking place or occurs frequently (Halliday & Matthiessen, Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar Fourth Edition, 2014). Furthermore, from (Thompson, 2014), stated that material processes involve physically manipulating different materials, such as cooking or scratching. These processes shape our environment and are part of our daily lives.

The writers decided to take one verse to be shown after had been analyzed from each song in the respective song album. The results are provided in the table so that the reader can easily understand the verses that have been examined. The results are shown as follows:

<i>Kiss</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>and</i>	<i>take off</i>	<i>your clothes</i>
<i>Process: Material</i>	<i>Participant I: Actor</i>		<i>Process: Material</i>	<i>Participant II: Goal</i>

Table 1. Example of material process in "imagine" song.

<i>You</i>	<i>can</i>	<i>go ahead</i>	<i>and</i>	<i>call</i>	<i>me selfish</i>
<i>Participant I: Actor</i>		<i>Process: Material</i>		<i>Process: Material</i>	<i>Participant II: Goal</i>

Table 2. Example of material process in “needy” song.

<i>Ain't no</i>	<i>checkin' on</i>	<i>when</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>get</i>	<i>home tonight</i>
	<i>Process: Material</i>		<i>Participant I: Actor</i>		<i>Participant II: Goal</i>

Table 3. Example of material process in “NASA” song.

<i>I</i>	<i>ain't</i>	<i>lookin'</i>	<i>for</i>	<i>my one true love</i>
<i>Participant I: Actor</i>		<i>Process: Material</i>		<i>Participant II: Goal</i>

Table 4. Example of material process in “bloodline” song.

<i>I</i>	<i>read</i>	<i>the things they write about me</i>
<i>Participant I: Actor</i>	<i>Process: Material</i>	<i>Participant II: Goal</i>

Table 5. Example of material process in “fake smile” song.

<i>Yeah,</i>	<i>I'ma</i>	<i>call</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>over here to numb the pain</i>
	<i>Participant I: Actor</i>	<i>Process: Material</i>	<i>Participant II: Goal</i>	

Table 6. Example of material process in “bad idea” song.

<i>Go 'head ruin</i>	<i>my makeup</i>
<i>Process: Material</i>	<i>Participant II: Goal</i>

Table 7. Example of material process in “make up” song.

<i>Look</i>	<i>at</i>	<i>the cards</i>	<i>that</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>'ve been dealt</i>
<i>Process: Material</i>		<i>Participant II: Goal</i>		<i>Participant I: Actor</i>	<i>Process: Material</i>

Table 8. Example of material process in “ghostin” song.

<i>I’m</i>	<i>coming over</i>
<i>Participant I: Actor</i>	<i>Process: Material</i>

Table 9. Example of material process in “in my head” song.

<i>Buy</i>	<i>myself</i>	<i>all of my favorite things</i>
<i>Process: Material</i>		<i>Participant II: Goal</i>

Table 10. Example of material process in “7 rings” song.

<i>Wrote</i>	<i>some songs</i>	<i>about Ricky</i>
<i>Process: Material</i>	<i>Participant II: Goal</i>	

Table 11. Example of material process in “thank u, next” song.

<i>You’re</i>	<i>singin’</i>	<i>my songs</i>	<i>in the streets, yeah, yeah</i>
<i>Participant I: Actor</i>	<i>Process: Material</i>	<i>Participant II: Goal</i>	

Table 12. Example of material process in “break up with your girlfriend, i’m bored” song.

Based on the material process that the writer analyzed, it can be concluded that the amount of material process from the first to the twelfth song is ninety-nine clauses.

Mental Process

Mental processes affect our behavior, involving memory recall, problem-solving, attention, and more. They operate unconsciously, shaping our experiences and interactions with the environment (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). While, from (Thompson, 2014), stated that mental processes are distinct from external events. They involve cognitive functions like perception, attention, memory, and language processing and shape our perceptions of the world.

The writers decided to take one verse to be shown after had been analyzed from each song in the respective song album. The results are provided in the table so that the reader can easily understand the verses that have been examined. The results are shown as follows:

Knew	you	were perfect after the first kiss
Process: Mental	Participant II: Phenomenon	

Table 13. Example of mental process in "imagine" song.

I	know	it	feels	so good	to be needed
Participant I: Senser	Process: Mental	Participant II: Phenomenon	Process: Mental		Process: Mental

Table 14. Example of mental process in "needy" song.

I	can't really	miss	you	if I'm with you
Participant I: Senser		Process: Mental	Participant II: Phenomenon	Circumstance: Accompaniment

Table 15. Example of mental process in "NASA" song.

Got	me	feelin'	so incredible
	Participant I: Senser	Process: Mental	Participant II: Phenomenon

Table 16. Example of mental process in "bloodline" song.

But	every now and then,	it's	shocking,
		Participant II: Phenomenon	Process: Mental

Table 17. Example of mental process in "fake smile" song.

I	've been	worried	'bout you	lately
Participant I: Senser		Process: Mental	Participant II: Phenomenon	

Table 18. Example of mental process in "bad idea" song.

Boy, you	know	what it is
Participant I: Senser	Process: Mental	Participant II: Phenomenon

Table 19. Example of mental process in “make up” song.

You	've been so understanding,
Participant I: Senser	Process: Mental

Table 20. Example of mental process in “ghostin” song.

I	thought	you	were the one
Participant I: Senser	Process: Mental	Participant II: Phenomenon	

Table 21. Example of mental process in “in my head” song.

I	want	it
Participant I: Senser	Process: Mental	Participant II: Phenomenon

Table 22. Example of mental process in “7 rings” song.

I	ain't	worried	'bout nothin'
Participant I: Senser		Process: Mental	Participant II: Phenomenon

Table 23. Example of mental process in “thank u, next” song.

Then I	realize	she's right there
Participant I: Senser	Process: Mental	Participant II: Phenomenon

Table 24. Example of mental process in “break up with your girlfriend, I'm bored” song.

Based on the mental process that the writer analyzed, it can be concluded that the amount of mental process from the first to the twelfth song is two hundred forty-one clauses.

Relational Process

Identifying and attributive relational processes differ in their reversibility and distinctive features. Identifying clauses describe a specific entity, while attributive clauses provide additional information about an entity (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Moreover, from (Thompson, 2014), stated that, identifying and attributive relational processes differ in their reversibility and distinctive features.

Identifying clauses describe a specific entity, while attributive clauses provide additional information about an entity.

The writers decided to take one verse to be shown after had been analyzed from each song in the respective song album. The results are provided in the table so that the reader can easily understand the verses that have been examined. The results are shown as follows:

This	is	a pleasure
Participant I: Token	Process: Relational: Identification	Participant II: Value

Table 25. Example of relational process in "imagine" song.

I	can	be	needy,
Participant I: Carrier		Process: Relational: Attribution	Participant II: Attribute

Table 26. Example of relational process in "needy" song.

You	'll be	my rise and shine
Participant I: Carrier		Process: Relational: Attribution

Table 27. Example of relational process in "NASA" song.

you	're	bad	for me
Participant I: Carrier		Process: Relational: Attribution	

Table 28. Example of relational process in "bloodline" song.

it	's	a vibe
Participant I: Carrier	Process: Relational: Identification	Participant II: Value

Table 29. Example of relational process in "make up" song.

It	was	all in my head
Participant I: Carrier	Process: Relational: Attribution	

Table 30. Example of relational process in "in my head" song.

I	should be	a sad bitch
Participant I:	Process: Relational:	Participant II:

Carrier	Attribution	Attribute
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Table 31. Example of relational process in “7 rings” song.

But	he	wasn’t	a match
	Participant I: Carrier	Process: Relational: Identification	Participant II: Value

Table 32. Example of relational process in “thank u, next” song.

Based on the relational process that the writer analyzed, it can be concluded that the amount of relational process from the first to the twelfth song is two hundred forty-one clauses.

Behavioral Process

Behavioral process involves analyzing an individual's observable actions, reactions, and emotions to gain insight into their mental and physical condition (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). While, from (Thompson, 2014), stated that behavioral process is action performed by humans, such as walking, talking, eating, and sleeping. They are crucial in fields like psychology, neuroscience, and medicine.

The writers decided to take one verse to be shown after had been analyzed from each song in the respective song album. The results are provided in the table so that the reader can easily understand the verses that have been examined. The results are shown as follows:

Then we gon’	sleep	‘til noon
Participant I: Behaver	Process: Behavioral	Circumstance: Extent: Temporal

Table 33. Example of behavioral process in “imagine” song.

I’m all	dressed up
Participant I: Behaver	Process: Behavioral

Table 34. Example of behavioral process in “needy” song.

I	can’t fake	another smile
Participant I: Behaver	Process: Behavioral	

Table 35. Example of behavioral process in "fake smile" song.

While	you	're sleeping
	Participant I: Behaver	Process: Behavioral

Table 36. Example of behavioral process in "ghostin" song.

Now	I	listen and laugh
	Participant I: Behaver	Process: Behavioral

Table 37. Example of behavioral process in "thank u, next" song.

Based on the behavioral process that the writer analyzed, it can be concluded that the amount of behavioral process from the first to the twelfth song is seventy-five clauses.

Verbal Process

Verbal process conveys a logical sequence of events that follows a statement or quote. It ensures accurate reporting and effective communication of complex ideas (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Furthermore, from (Thompson, 2014), stated that verbal process involves using verbs to convey an action of speaking or saying something. They are an essential communication component often used to get information or express opinions.

The writers decided to take one verse to be shown after had been analyzed from each song in the respective song album. The results are provided in the table so that the reader can easily understand the verses that have been examined. The results are shown as follows:

But	all I	can say	is at least I'll wait for you
	Participant I: Sayer	Process: Verbal	Participant II: Verbiage

Table 38. Example of verbal process in "needy" song.

You	can say	"I love you"	through the phone tonight
Participant I: Sayer	Process: Verbal	Participant II: Verbiage	

Table 39. Example of verbal process in "NASA" song.

I	ain't got	nothin'	to say
Participant I: Sayer		Participant II: Verbiage	Process: Verbal

Table 40. Example of verbal process in "bloodline" song.

And	I	won't say	I'm feeling fine
	Participant I: Sayer	Process: Verbal	Participant II: Verbiage

Table 41. Example of verbal process in "fake smile" song.

When	you	say that	I'm right
	Participant I: Sayer	Process: Verbal	Participant II: Verbiage

Table 42. Example of verbal process in "make up" song.

They	say,	"which one?" I say, "Nah, I want all of 'em"
Participant I: Sayer	Process: Verbal	Participant II: Verbiage

Table 43. Example of verbal process in "7 rings" song.

I	say	"thank u, next"
Participant I: Sayer	Process: Verbal	Participant II: Verbiage

Table 44. Example of verbal process in "thank u, next" song.

You	could say	I'm hatin' if you want to
Participant I: Sayer	Process: Verbal	Participant II: Verbiage

Table 45. Example of verbal process in "break up with your girlfriend, i'm bored" song.

Based on the verbal process that the writer analyzed, it can be concluded that the amount of verbal process from the first to the twelfth song is forty-one clauses.

Existential Process

Existential processes explore human identity and meaning in the world. Identifying the main point is crucial to understanding new information (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). While, from, (Thompson, 2014), stated that existential process involves relinquishing the portrayal of the participant as being actively engaged in events. This emphasizes their existential state over involvement in external affairs.

The writers decided to take one verse to be shown after had been analyzed from each song in the respective song album. The results are provided in the table so that the reader can easily understand the verses that have been examined. The results are shown as follows:

Lately,	I	've been	on a	roller coaster
Circumstance: Extent: Frequency		Process: Existential		Participant II: Existent

Table 46. Example of existential process in "needy" song.

Every tear's	a rain	parade	from hell
	Participant II: Existent	Process: Existential	

Table 47. Example of existential process in "ghostin" song.

Based on the existential process that the writer analyzed, it can be concluded that the amount of existential process from the first to the twelfth song is two clauses.

Based on the analysis above, the writer already finished analyzing the six types of process from Ariana Grande's album "thank u, next". From the material process, the writer found ninety-nine clauses; from the mental process, the writer found two hundred forty-one clauses; from the relational process, the writer found fifty-one clauses; from the behavioral process, the writer found seventy-five clauses; from the verbal process, the writer found forty-one clauses; and from the existential process, the writer found two clauses.

Conclusion

In this study, the writers discussed the types of processes that can be found in Ariana Grande's album "thank u, next". Using M.A.K. Halliday, Christian Matthiessen, and Geoff Thompson's theory as a guide to analyze the album's song lyrics and find each type of process from the "thank u, next" album. After the writers collected all the lyrics, they checked each lyric from the song and identified each type of process that can be found in Ariana Grande's album "thank u, next".

The writer can conclude that the material process has ninety-nine clauses; the mental process has two hundred forty-one clauses; the relational process has fifty-one clauses; the behavioral process has seventy-five clauses; the verbal process has forty-one clauses; and the existential process has two clauses. So, the total clauses from material processes to existential processes, there are five hundred and eight clauses found in Ariana Grande's album "thank u, next".

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