



Circumstantial Choices and their Roles in the Development of Meaning-Making in Selected Conference Abstracts

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ABSTRACT

Examining the various types of situational possibilities indicated in the selected conference abstracts is the goal of this study. The two conference books of abstracts with the themes of Increasing Female Education and Employment in Science and Technology for Sustainable National Transformation and Africa's Search for Sustainable Development: Issues and Challenges for African Intellectuals were used to choose the abstracts. The departments of environmental studies, engineering, management studies, pure and applied sciences, and information and technology management. The International Research and Development Institute, Conference Hall, Uyo, Nigeria, and the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, respectively, hosted these chosen conference books of abstracts in 2016 and 2012. This study included both quantitative and qualitative research methods. We classified the various types of situational alternatives in the selected abstracts using data from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (hence, SFL). In the selected abstracts, the research discovered seven circumstantial options, including extent, place, style, cause, accompaniment, substance, and role. However, the chosen data does not include a contingency option. With 35.3 percent of all circumstantial alternatives, the location option was also found to be the most prevalent option. This study has pedagogical value because it aids researchers and students in concentrating on meaning rather than grammar structure.

Keywords: Circumstantial options, Language, conference abstracts, SFL

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of the discipline it originates from, abstract writing is an intellectual activity that necessitates meaning-making. Since writing is a nonverbal form of communication, it may not be possible for writers and readers to participate in verbal culture when writing about abstract ideas (Bird, 2010). Circumstances is the portion of the Transitivity System that is linked to the process in the experience strand of meaning, according to Systemic Functional Linguistics (hence, SFL). When writing an abstract, the author has the freedom to choose the linguistic tools from which to give the readers with the study ideas. Compared to other styles of speech, abstract has a tendency to be less face-to-face, reflective, face-to-face, formal, and focused on particular situations.

Ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions are what allow language to achieve meaning, in accordance with the SFL theory of language. The participants (realized by nominal groups), processes (realized by verbal groups), and circumstances (realized by prepositional phrases or adverbs denoting time, location, or manner) of each process type are how the experiential metafunction conveys human experience of the world.

Different grammatical choices at various ranks, according to Halliday (1985), Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), and Martin (1992), yield similar "circumstantial meanings" in the "circumstantial" portions that build the "when, where, how, why, etc." of human experience. Three studies—Dreyfus and Bennett (2017), Dreyfus and Jones (2011), and Dreyfus and Jones (2018)—examined the "higher level" significance of circumstantial evidence and the role of circumstantial decisions in historical abstractions. For instance, Dreyfus and Bennett (2017) examined "different circumstantial" judgments made in historical research articles. They demonstrated the need to take into account all grammatical realisations of circumstantial meaning, not only those at the sentence rank, in order to account for the realisation of circumstantial meaning at a "higher level." In a similar vein, Dreyfus and Jones (2008, 2011) emphasized "place" to examine "higher" level contextual meaning. They proposed in their study that different sorts of locales be categorized while taking into account the meanings that are formed by different grammatical realizations. The findings showed that "circumstantial meaning" had a wide range of meaning potential at a "higher" level than the lexicogrammar, but they also presented a number of unresolved problems. A fuller understanding of how information is construed across disciplines is possible thanks to the ability to explain how circumstantial meanings contribute to the development of academic knowledge across entire domains. Through an analysis of how conference attendees from diverse disciplines explain their research findings and convey their message(s), this study aims to analyze the roles played by conditions in the formation of conference abstracts.

Theoretical Framework

A Transitivity System component called circumstance realizes the Process, the Participants, and itself. The experience line of meaning is realized through circumstance, one of the three components in the transitivity system (Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999). This involves a process that evolves through time, a participant in the process, and circumstances pertinent to the process. The primary meaning of the sentence "Joké is sleeping on the bed," for instance, is that there is only one person, the noun Joké, who is actually doing the sleeping. The situation on the bed, in a sense, is the auxiliary component that moves freely around the action. In SFL, this is referred to as a "nuclear" model of transitivity (Halliday, 1979). It feeds off the Transitivity process and gives it new data (also see Halliday, 1994, p. 151; Ravelli, 2000, p. 35). According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), the circumstances are appended to the end of sentences. The freedom of circumstances within a clause with the same relevance at any point of operation is one feature that sets circumstances apart from other clauses. Prepositional phrases and adverbs, according to Bloor and Bloor (2004), aid in context clarity. Role, Angle, Location, Extent, Manner, Matter, and Contingency are the nine kinds of circumstances in the realisation of circumstances (Thompson, 2004, p. 110). The nine categories of conditions in the System Network are shown in Figure 1 below.

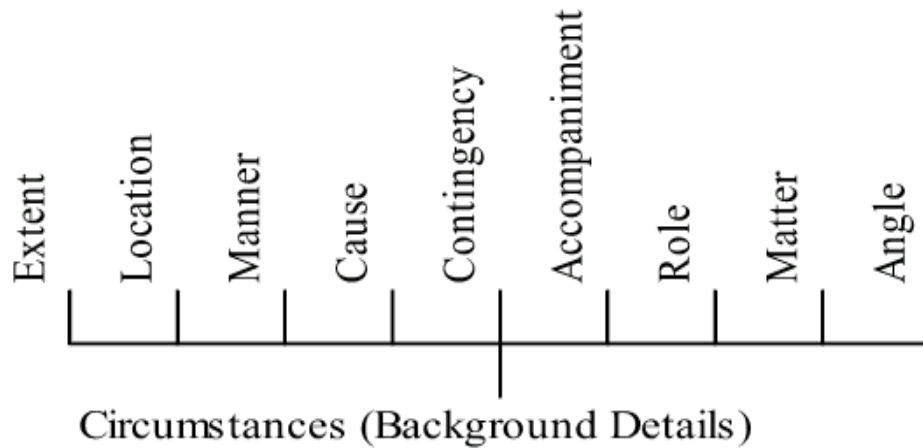


Figure 1: Circumstances System Network (Thompson, 2014)

In order to get meaning from the System Network above, we can ask questions about how "the meaning of circumstances can be probed by a wh- item as follows: when, where, what about, who with, what as, and how involved" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Thompson, 2014).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies are used in this study. Researchers might measure the chosen data using the quantitative research approach from a statistical and numerical perspective. We used a surveying technique where the results are quantified by frequency and percentage. In addition to allowing flexibility, frequency and percentages make sure that we have a wider variety of trustworthy data. The study, which was qualitative in nature, was founded on the many viewpoints that were adverbially expressed in the conference abstracts. This entails looking at the emotions, thoughts, and reasons behind the decisions that academics (the authors of the conference papers) have while specific events take place. Abstracts of conference papers serve as the study's research subject. The conference abstracts' various themes—including those related to transportation, education, the economy, unemployment, health, law, and the judiciary—are emphasized. Abstracts from one hundred (100) conferences were gathered and read. Only thirty (30) of these were specifically chosen for the analysis. Purposive sampling is the method we used for qualitative research since it is time-efficient and enables us to analyze samples systematically using the data at hand. Each abstract was divided into clauses according to the kind of process, who the participants were, and what evidence was available. We studied the abstracts to find the circumstantial choices included therein and then analyzed the contents in relation to viewpoints voiced by academics in the relevant fields.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Table 1: Contextual Possibilities in the Selected Texts

S/N	Circumstances	SMS	SPAS	SIT	SES	SE	Total	%100
1	Extent	5	5	3	6	5	24	8.6
2	Location	21	29	19	10	19	98	35.3
3	Manner	3	3	3	3	5	17	6.1
4	Cause	6	6	5	9	7	33	11.9
5	Accompaniment	5	2	2	5	3	17	6.1
6	Matter	6	17	12	14	11	60	21.6
7	Role	3	4	16	6	0	29	10.4
	Total	49	66	60	53	50	278	

Location, matter, and cause have the most instances in Table 1 above. Role, extent, and manner/accompaniment are listed after them. Except for extent, method, and accompaniment, which together account for 98 instances (35.3%), location predominates in every text. Matter is the following dominant. It appears 60 times total in the literature, or 21.6% of all instances. Cause occurs 33 times (11.9%), which aids in understanding the texts' meanings. Role appears 29 times (10.4%) to describe the actions of certain participants. Extent appears 24 times (8.6%), demonstrating that it is likewise important in the realization of the texts' content.

It makes the SMS, SPAS, and SE messages much easier to understand. Though not particularly noteworthy, Manner (17(6.1%) and Accompaniment (17(6.1%) have the lowest occurrences and aid in understanding how and when specific events occurred, respectively.

Interpretation of Circumstantial Options

Extent

The following examples show how the choice of extent in the texts is utilized to explain HOW specific events occurred.

First excerpt... from both genders equally (SIT, clause 1). Extent illustrates how women's growth might differ greatly from that of their male counterparts in the aforementioned scenario. Some of the texts also use the word "extent" to describe the duration of specific events. Consider the following examples.

3rd excerpt

- 1.... at whatever cost... (T3, S20)
2. of a 45% rise... (SMS, S22)
3. ... between teaching and research... (SPAS, S49)
- 4.... once a week... (SES, S8)
- 5.... on the rise... (T4, S13)
- 6.... in the early dawn... (SES, S11)

7. Frequently (SPAS, S21)

8. Too much time off (SMS, S6).

In the first example, scope allows us to determine the length of time that women have contributed to the food production process in the majority of Northern Nigerian communities. Examples 2 and 3 provide details on the duration of specific state-wide occurrences. Some of the texts also employ the word "extent" to describe the degree to which specific events occurred. Take a look at the following instances.

Excerpt 3

1. ... at all costs ... (T3, S20)
2. ... of 45 percent increase... (SMS, S22)
3. ... between age 30-70 ... (SIT, S5)
- 4... as long as 25 metres ... (SES, S31)

Location

In the instances below, the locations mentioned in the texts provide information on the dates of specific occurrences.

1. ... in the bud (SIT, S34)
2. ... in health education... (SIT, S30)
3. ... at the vital area... (SIT, S56)
4. ... in the syllabus... (SMS, S13)
5. ... after loan delivery (SMS, S52)
6. ... into the atmosphere... (SE, S2)

The following examples use location to show WHERE specific events in the chosen texts occurred.

Extract 2

1. ... in conference workshop (SE, S59)
2. ... in major cities... (SPAS, S34)
3. ... in Nigeria (SMS, S7)
4. ... in the Polytechnic environment (SES, S15)
5. ... on the contribution of women... (SIT, S45)
6. ... in a rapidly changing environment (SIT, S4)

7. ... in the long run... (SE, S7)
8. ...in the vocational and technical education... (SPAS, S19)
9. ...in higher institution... (SPAS, S51)
10. ... in food security (SMS, S17)
11. ... in place of human development... (SES)

Manner

The word "manner" describes HOW (MEANS) specific events occurred in some of the chosen texts. For instance:

Excerpt 1: by learning new skills (SE, S18). In order to choose the finest possibilities for particular events, the writer uses manner to COMPARE EVENTS.

1. Similar to TVET students (SMS, S14)
- 2.... by providing electricity... (SMS, S12)

The manner used in the samples below reveals the FREQUENCY of specific events in some of the chosen texts.

3rd excerpt

1. Occasionally (SMS, S4)
- 2.... per week (SMS, S7)
3. From time to time (SMS, S14)
- 4....prompt (SIT, S10)
- 5.. ... immediately (SIT, 12)
6. ... drastically (SIT, 16))
7. ... urgently (SES, S21)
8. ... thoroughly (SES, S25)
9. ... effectively (SE, 11)
10. ... monthly (SE, 17)
11. ... subsequently (SPAS, S24)
12. ... simultaneously (SPAS, S27)

Cause

Cause, which is a part of circumstance, explains the REASONS behind specific occurrences that occurred in some of the chosen abstracts.

Excerpt 1

1. ... in order to... (SMS, S20)
- 2... as a result of... (SMS, S26)
3. ... for the production of... (SIT, S4)
4. ... by pests... (SIT, S7)
5. ... by men opposition... (SES, S6)
6. ... for poverty eradication (SES, S10)
7. ... for solving the problem of unemployment (SMS, S26). It also clarifies ON WHOSE BEHALF particular events in some of the selected novels took place. For illustration:

National Board for Technical Education, in Excerpt 2 (SMS, 30). Cause also explains WHY particular actions are taken. For instance:

Extracted from ... to create self employment after graduation (SPAS, S13)

Accompaniment

In several of the chosen texts, the presence of accompaniment reveals TO US WITH/WITHOUT WHOM/WHAT certain events occurred.

Excerpt

1. ... with the multi-facet.... (SMS, S34)
- With the help of two researches... (SMS, S50)
3. ...with unemployment... (SIT, S15)
4. ...with the recent increase... (SPAS, S32)
5. ... of Ilaro town (SPAS, S38)
6. ... with high increase in crime... (SE, S12)

7. ... without respect for women... (SE, S20)
8. ... With the devaluation of naira (SMS, S60)

Matter

In the examples that follow, matter tells us about specific occurrences that occurred in some of the chosen texts.

Excerpt

1. ... for multimedia technology education (PAS, S1)
2. ... of computer hardware ... (PAS, S5)
3. ... for students reflection (PAS, S11)
4. ... according to individual potentials... (SE, S16)
5. ... for household... (SE, S30)
6. ... for performance evaluation... (SE, S4)
7. ... for science subjects... (SMS, S16)
8. ... by sociocultural factors... (SMS, S18)
9. ... of Kebbi State (SMS, S20)
10. ... by Western education (SES, S5)
11. ... about female empowerment (SES, S14)
12. ... by incessant trike... (SES, S19)
13. ...for national development (SIT, S12)
14. ... by any nation (SIT, S21)
15. ... for empowering women (SIT, S25)

Role

In the following examples, role gives information about what certain participants appear as.

Excerpt

- 1...as a means of... (SMS, S33)
- 2...as the bedrock... (SIT, S1)

3...as a tool... (SIT, S10)

4... as fundamental... (PAS, S2)

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on the aforementioned analysis, conference abstracts aid in better articulating the conclusions of the complete work from the relevant fields as well as the distinctive manner of treating language and content. The abstract's wording is concise and succinct, and the writer uses it to offer a synopsis of the full study project. Writing abstracts gives the author the chance to use language in a distinctive way, and text is important and conspicuous in this subject. Circumstances are an alternative for the experiential function of language, and it offers a variety of ways language can be utilized to express meaning in conference abstracts. Therefore, situational possibilities aid in the realization of the abstracts' message depending on the conferences' various themes. The abstracts analyzed in this study include material on national development and transition in Africa. Security, economy, transformation, information technology, agriculture, education, politics, conflict, finance, health, and ecology are all aspects of Africa's national development. The abstracts chosen for this study highlighted the difficulties associated with the aforementioned problems as well as potential solutions for Africa's growth. In achieving the transformation agenda of the current administration, for example, the selected abstracts noted that men and women both had complementary roles to play. They also came to the conclusion that both men and women should view their positions as a call to serve humanity rather than as a privilege, and that African women and other feminists should exercise caution in their trade in the fight for gender equality.

Another theme that the abstracts focus on is Africa's drive for sustainable development with regard to difficulties and challenges for African intellectuals. The abstracts cover a wide range of theoretical topics pertaining to research for sustainable development and also present some applications from a variety of disciplines, including law, business management, the arts and humanities, medicine, physical sciences, biological sciences, pharmaceutical sciences, education, engineering, agriculture, and environmental sciences, all of which are meant to enhance development.

Our research showed that abstracts succinctly communicate information in a brief and concise manner. This can be seen in the way they speak. The transitivity system serves as a tool that enables readers to comprehend how each abstract's authors adopted specific procedures, participants, and conditions that aid in critically analyzing the tone and mood of the authors as they are expressed in their language.

CONCLUSION

The SFL theoretical framework was used in this investigation. It allowed us to conduct an organized and thorough text-linguistic examination of the conference abstracts. The results demonstrated the presence of seven circumstantial choices in the chosen abstracts, including extent, place, manner, cause, accompaniment, matter, and role. There is no contingency option in the selected abstracts, though. Furthermore, with 35.3% of all possible circumstances, it was found that the choice of place was the most common scenario.

The exploration of SFL in this study allowed us to examine the data from the language point of view; hence making it possible for the readers of the conference abstracts to make meaning out of the research papers.

For students and researchers, circumstantial study of the conference abstracts has pedagogical value. They benefit from concentrating on the sentence's meaning potential rather than its grammatical structure. Additionally, it aids in the formation of clear, concise sentences that effectively convey their intended meanings through the corresponding grammatical elements of processes for both researchers and students.

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