



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Transitivity Analysis of an Academic Document: A Case of English Course Syllabi at Saudi Electronic University

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This study aims to examine English course syllabi at Saudi Electronic University. It employs critical discourse analysis (CDA), focusing on Halliday's transitivity system, to identify the transitivity processes. The data were obtained from seven English third-year course syllabi from the Bachelor of English Language and Translation program at Saudi Electronic University. Qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted; specifically, a quantitative method was used to determine the frequency of transitivity process types within a clause, and a qualitative method to indicate a thorough examination of how language patterns are used in context to reveal the intentional meanings of texts. Results showed that the material process with 68.44% is the most frequent process used in the seven academic syllabi, which highlight the dominant part of the material process recorded as the most frequent type compared to other processes found in the academic course syllabuses. Also, the results showed the absence of the existential process type. Examining the roles of participants and the elements of the circumstances may provide further information suitable for follow-up studies.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In educational institutions of higher learning, there is a persistent endeavor to involve students, as they hold a pivotal position in the instructional and acquisition of the knowledge process (Bowden et al., 2021; Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Zepke et al., 2012). Course syllabi are considered a key pedagogical tool in addressing this challenge. According to Bowers-Campbell (2015) a course syllabus serves as a document that outlines the course's objectives, subject matter, required materials, assignments, grading criteria, and other relevant details, all of which collectively establish clear expectations for students. Palmer et al. (2016) stresses the fact that course syllabi are crucial to higher education through influencing students' views, engagement, and learning experiences. Furthermore, the authors argue for shifting to learning-focused curricula that improve student motivation and achievement while boosting the learning environment. To scrutinize a course syllabus, critical discourse analysis can be utilized for the process analysis.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) serves as a critical tool in colleges and universities by offering a framework for examining and comprehending the complex interconnections between language, power, and societal systems (Li & Eryong, 2021; Stamatescu, 2022; Zajda, 2023). Educators emphasize the significance of CDA in educational settings, as it enables the critical assessment and challenge of discourses that impact educational practices and policies, ultimately fostering the growth of fairer and more inclusive learning environments. Researchers aim to analyze academic documents in higher education institutions by employing transitivity theory, a valuable tool in

Systemic Functional Grammar. This theory helps understand discourse structure by examining the processes within clauses (Alhumsi et al., 2021; Alsaedi, 2024; Emilia et al., 2017). The goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the process types in these documents. The results of this study will benefit policymakers, educators, and scholars. Transitivity analysis has been applied to a variety of discourses, including news reports (Shi, 2019), research articles (Zheng, 2021), political speeches (Xiang, 2022), advertisements (Alsaedi, 2024) and health-related news during events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Alhumsi et al., 2021; Alhumsi & Alshagrawi, 2022). However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, no study has analyzed the course syllabi in higher education using transitivity analysis. Hence, the current study aims to examine the course syllabi of seven English department courses at Saudi Electronic University. The central inquiry is: what are the most commonly used transitivity processes in the English course syllabi in the Bachelor of English Language and Translation program at Saudi Electronic University?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Course syllabus in higher education**

The course syllabus is a foundational document that profoundly affects instructional methods, student learning, and the administrative framework within higher education institutions. Serving as a key means of communication, organization, and assessment, it facilitates educational processes (Richmond et al., 2018). The syllabus provides a thorough and detailed outline of the course, including the primary topics, goals, assessment methods, timetable, and regulations, all of which have been established by the teacher. This document is essential for establishing an academic environment for the semester and influencing students' early impressions of the class (Fischer et al., 2022). In addition, Palmer et al. (2016) differentiated between curricula that prioritize learning by emphasizing engaging course material to enhance the educational environment, and standard syllabi that mainly focus on content. At the end of their study, Palmer et al. (2016) found that students prioritize performance-related components in standard syllabi. However, a syllabus with a friendly tone might have a good impact on students' motivation and views, highlighting the necessity of syllabi as useful teaching resources in higher education (Ludy et al., 2016; Palmer et al., 2016). Furthermore, Richmond et al. (2018) demonstrated that adopting a learner-centered syllabus can foster a collaborative learning environment, effectively convey explicit objectives, and establish a positive atmosphere at the beginning of a course.

Interestingly, academic institutions, in the face of expanding student populations and technological advancements, are increasingly prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion (Garcia, 2021; Padilla-Carmona et al., 2020). Course syllabi must be adjusted to accommodate the increasing number of students, which presents issues in meeting their various learning demands and providing adequate resources. In addition, incorporating these principles into course syllabi can enhance student engagement and performance by fostering a sense of community (Fuentes et al., 2021). Thus, course syllabi serve as a rich data source for academic research, enabling investigations into curricular alignment, teaching approaches (Katsampoxaki-Hodgetts, 2023), knowledge representation, and triangulation with other data sources (Bowen, 2009; Dou et al., 2019), which contributes to a deeper understanding and continuous improvement of teaching and learning in higher education.

It should be noted that the structure of syllabi, especially in online courses, can also serve as an indicator of course excellence and student achievement (Fischer et al., 2022). A 'naked' syllabus, which prioritizes student autonomy, can compel faculty members to reassess their instructional methodologies (Katsampoxaki-Hodgetts, 2023). Syllabi are instrumental in gathering accreditation data and ensuring quality control (Ivey et al., 2018).

### **2.2 Discourse analysis**

Discourse analysis (DA) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) are used to examine language and how they are employed in different situations. DA, on the one hand, explores how language is utilized in social contexts for communication and evaluates texts to determine how they accomplish goals (Alhumsi & Alshagrawi, 2022). It includes looking at language usage overall and beyond the level of individual sentences (Alhumsi et al., 2021). On the other hand, CDA extends the scope of DA by incorporating an examination of the social and ideological underpinnings of discourse. It investigates

language as a tool for social activity and studies the connections between ideology, power, discourse, and social ideals (Alhumsi & Alshagrawi, 2022). The main objective of CDA is to reveal the ways in which discourse structures validate, justify, reproduce, or resist power and dominance relations in society (Alhumsi et al., 2021). The importance of DA and CDA is their capacity to clarify the implications and deeper meanings of language use in text. For instance, CDA can be implemented to investigate the extent to which media discourse influences public perception and opinion (Sofyaningrat et al., 2023). Additionally, CDA analyzes the roles and behaviors attributed to various individuals in a text using methods such as the transitivity system (presented in the next section), which can shed light on how language produces social realities (Alhumsi & Alsaedi, 2023). For example, the selection of active or passive voices can either emphasize or obscure the agents of an action, which may influence readers' comprehension of agency and responsibility (Alhumsi et al., 2021). In general, both DA and CDA offer valuable frameworks for academic and media analyses that enable the exploration of the intricate ways in which language functions in cultural, social, and political contexts, thereby fostering a more comprehensive understanding of broader socio-political and ideological settings. Specifically, in our study, applying DA will allow us to examine the academic documents within a higher education institution using transitivity theory to achieve a more profound understanding of the types of processes present in these documents.

### 2.3 Transitivity model

Transitivity analysis is a linguistic measure that is used to analyze texts at the clause level (Alhumsi & Alsaedi, 2023). It is founded on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics and is employed to identify the processes employed in a text, including material, mental, relational, verbal, existential, and behavioral processes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The analysis is instrumental in comprehending the interrelationships between various elements (verb, subject, and object) and their contributions to the ideologies and meanings contained within the text (Alhumsi et al., 2021; Alhumsi & Alsaedi, 2023). Halliday's transitivity model posits that a clause is composed of three primary components: process, participants, and circumstances (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In their theory, the term "process" denotes the action that is being executed, "participants" denotes the entities that are involved in the process, and "circumstances" denote the context in which the process is occurring. Significantly, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) identified six process types: material, mental, relational, verbal, existential, and behavioral, based on these components. The primary protagonists in material processes are an actor and an objective, and they are characterized by action and occurrence. The participant's role is typically that of a sensor or perceiver, and mental processes are associated with mental states. The relationship between the subject and complement is characterized by relational processes. Speech and communication are also linked to verbal processes. The existence or presence of something is indicated by existing processes. Lastly, behavioral processes are used to characterize physiological activities or behavior (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Transitivity analysis has been employed in numerous studies to investigate a diverse array of elements associated with language and meaning in a variety of contexts, including research articles (Lin, 2024; Zheng, 2021), news media (Alhumsi et al., 2021; Lastari, 2023), and political writings (Alhumsi & Alsaedi, 2023; Xiang, 2022). In academic settings, Zheng (2021) conducted a study aimed at investigating the transitivity framework in research papers in order to gain a deeper understanding of how experiential meaning is established in academic writing. Zheng's (2021) study utilized ten applied linguistics research articles, published in esteemed journals between 2018 and 2020, as a sample corpus. The researcher revealed that the writers utilized specific verbal processes in the introduction and methodology sections of the research articles to establish themselves within a relevant literature context and to strengthen the authority of their arguments. In addition, the utilization of passive voice in research articles has declined, and the methodologies implemented across sections have generated substantial discoveries. The above study clearly elucidates the ways in which various process types contribute to expressing distinct meanings in academic writing, underscoring the pivotal role of language usage in constructing meaning and the overall framework of academic writing.

In another study, Lin et al. (2024) conducted a study on the transitivity of article abstracts in English for Science and Technology (EST). The objective of their study was to analyze how writers generate

experience meanings in abstracts of research articles and see if there are variations in transitivity processes among various parts. The study analyzed 30 randomly selected abstracts from EST research articles and finds that authors use a range of process categories in their abstracts, with material and relational processes being the most common. Their research demonstrated the distribution of transitivity procedures throughout various sections, revealing substantial disparities in the abstract, introduction, methods, findings, and discussion sections. It also offered a deeper understanding of how scientific authors utilize transitivity processes to create knowledge and persuade readers in scientific communication, emphasizing the importance of language in academic discourse.

In political writings, Alhumsy and Alsaedi (2023) employed transitivity analysis to investigate gender variations in political media discourse. They used critical discourse analysis of Halliday's theory of transitivity process types to investigate the point of view from the perspective of male and female columnists. Gender variation is one of the important components that this research wants to explore in relation to language. According to their study, men like to assume dominant and commanding roles, whilst women tend to employ more relational and mental processes to justify their viewpoints. Their study also unveils the distinct linguistic characteristics that men and women employ in political discourse. In similar contexts, Xiang (2022) examines Joe Biden's inaugural address as the 46th president of the United States to illustrate the usefulness of systemic functional grammar in examining political and news discourse. The analysis exhibits how President Biden employs various linguistic tactics to motivate and persuade the American people to attain their political objectives, thereby validating the efficacy of systemic functional grammar in evaluating political speeches.

In news media, Alhumsy et al. (2021) examined the writing style of university news articles within the pandemic. Their objective was to reveal the precise language traits and transitivity processes employed by news writers in this particular setting. The authors examined the disparities in language utilization between the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods by employing Halliday's systemic functional grammar. This allowed them to showcase the diverse ways in which language reacted to the crisis. The findings indicate a change in word choice, specifically in relation to the intended message of the text. This study emphasizes the significance of transitivity analysis in understanding the linguistic features of news texts when discussing crises, such as pandemics. It also emphasizes the significance of positioning discourse analysis-based studies within the realm of academia. Similarly, Alhumsy and Alshagrawi (2022) analyzed the health recommendations and awareness-raising initiatives on the Ministry of Health website of Saudi Arabia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their research emphasized the involvement of the Saudi government in utilizing various media platforms to educate the public about the illness and provide practical advice for mitigating its impact. Their study also underlined the importance of the material, relational, and behavioral processes in the healthcare sector that the government used to contain the pandemic. In the conclusion, both researchers emphasized the material process type, which demonstrates the importance of maintaining personal hygiene, being responsible for human interaction, being socially involved, and preserving social distance in order to prevent the virus from spreading rapidly.

In another context, Lastari (2023) investigated the topics surrounding all-day education in Indonesian news. The study conducted a comprehensive analysis of internet news to investigate the discourse around the problem, its influence on various stakeholders, and the strategies employed to address it. Lastari's (2023) study indicated that the predominant sort of activity included in the news was the implementation of activities. The researcher also demonstrated the influence of words on readers' perceptions and their ability to provide diverse perspectives. It employed various grammatical elements to indicate the individuals and subjects concerned. Lastari's (2023) research made it easier to see how social worries are told in Indonesian news.

In educational context, Emilia et al. (2017) explored the topic of gender in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, specifically in an Indonesian context, by analyzing reading passages in English textbooks. Their research used a critical discourse analysis and transitivity method to analyze the language used in the textbooks, which revealed that males were frequently depicted as adventurous, risk-takers, and active, whereas women were portrayed as mothers and wives. Their work raised the concern of gender bias and sexism in English textbooks and encourages the provision of appropriate learning materials to avoid misconceptions of gender. The findings suggest the need

to position gender issues in the classroom and promote a learner-centered and inclusive environment in English language teaching (ELT).

In terms of discourse in course syllabi, Liang (2023) examined three English for Medical Purposes courses, with a specific focus on the power dynamics that are inherent in their curriculum. The findings revealed that professors exerted control over pupils, with persistent imbalances in power dynamics. The researcher emphasized the need to create an educational environment that focuses on the requirements of the learners and providing a variety of learning opportunities to meet those needs. Furthermore, Liang's (2023) study provided suggestions for creating syllabi and improving language instruction in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). While Liang's research offered useful insights, it did not directly pertain to the main objective of this work, which is to examine syllabi from the perspective of transitivity. The differentiation is of utmost importance as transitivity analysis provides a separate viewpoint by closely examining how activities, people, and processes are portrayed in texts, a perspective that is not investigated through critical discourse analysis. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate English syllabi in higher education by employing the transitivity analysis.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The present study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method is primarily employed to determine the frequency of transitivity process types within a clause. According to Köhler (2012), a quantitative approach is essential for enhancing the accuracy of assessing textual data. On the other hand, the qualitative method is used to conduct a thorough examination of how language patterns are used in context to reveal intentional meanings of texts (Bartley, 2018).

The data of the current study is collected from seven syllabi of third-year courses within the Bachelor of English Language and Translation program at Saudi Electronic University. These syllabi were selected due to their specific relevance to English rather than translation, which are predominantly concentrated in the third year of the program. The program spans four academic years, with each year divided into two semesters. Students complete one level of the program each semester. This study focuses on the fifth and sixth levels of the program, investigating four of the seven syllabi from the fifth level (1st level in 3rd year) and three from the sixth level (2nd level in 3rd year). To analyze the data, the text of each syllabus is segmented into clauses using Microsoft Office Word. The clauses were categorized based on Halliday and Webster's (2014) transitivity system to determine the transitivity patterns used. The total number of processes and their frequency were calculated using Microsoft Office Excel. Table 1 displays the types of processes, participants' roles, and circumstances identified by the transitivity system.

**Table 1: Types of processes, participants' roles, and circumstances**

Process Types	Participants' Roles	Circumstances
Material	Actor + Goal	Extent
Mental	Senser + Phenomenon	Location (time, place)
Verbal	Sayer + Target	Cause
Relational	Carrier + Attribute	Manner
Existential	Existent	Matter
Behavioral	Behaver	Accompaniment

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Transitivity process types in the first level of the third-year course syllabi

#### 4.1.1 ENG 301: "Introduction to linguistics"

In the ENG301 syllabus, only three types of transitivity processes are recognized: material, mental, and relational. The material process is the most dominant, accounting for 74.07%. The percentages for relational and mental processes are close, with 14.81% and 11.11%, respectively. Table 2 shows the distribution of the three process types in the ENG301 syllabus.

**Table 2: Distribution of process types in ENG301 syllabus**

Process types	Frequencies	Percentage
Material	20	74.07 %
Mental	3	11.11%
Relational	4	14.81%
Total	27	100%

Table 3 (see appendix 1) shows the transitivity analysis of the process types utilized in the ENG301 syllabus. It has been found that material process is the most commonly employed, as expressed by verbs such as 'design', 'introduce', and 'implement'. Furthermore, relational and mental processes have a relatively close proportion, in which relational process represented by four verbs such as 'is' and 'have', while mental process is represented only by the three verbs, namely, 'distinguish', 'analyze', and 'understand'.

#### 4.1.2. ENG 310: "Lexicography"

The ENG310 syllabus includes five out of the six types of transitivity processes: material, mental, verbal, relational, and behavioral. The material process is the most common, accounting for 62.22%. The mental processes ranked second, accounting for 24.44%. The relational and verbal have a pretty close percentage: 6.67% and 4.44%, respectively. The behavioral process type has the lowest percentage, specifically 2.22%. It is worth noting that the behavioral process is exclusively observed in the ENG310 syllabus. Table 4 shows the distribution of the process types in this syllabus.

**Table 4: Distribution of process types in ENG310 syllabus**

Process types	Frequencies	Percentage
Material	28	62.22%
Mental	11	24.44%
Verbal	2	4.44%
Relational	3	6.67%
Behavioral	1	2.22%
Total	45	100%

Table 5 (see appendix 2) presents the transitivity analysis of process types used in the ENG310 syllabus. The material process is the most dominant, represented by verbs such as 'provides', 'selecting', and 'present'. The mental process is ranked second in verbs such as 'recognize', 'analyze', and 'understand'. The relational process is ranked third and observed in three verbs: 'including', 'is', and 'having'. The verbal process is found in "can be explained," which is repeated twice, whereas the behavioral process is represented by one verb ('acquaints').

#### 4.1.3 ENG 320: "Comparative constructions"

In the ENG320 syllabus, four types of transitivity processes are found: material, relational, mental, and verbal. The material process is by far the most dominant, accounting for 85.29% of the total number of processes. Relational process is ranked second at 8.82%, followed by mental and verbal processes at 2.94% each. Table 6 illustrates the distribution of process types in the ENG320 syllabus.

**Table 6: Distribution of process types in ENG320 syllabus**

Process types	Frequencies	Percentage
Material	29	85.29%
Mental	1	2.94%
Verbal	1	2.94%
Relational	3	8.82%
Total	34	100%

Table 7 (see appendix 3) expresses the transitivity analysis of process types deployed in the ENG320 syllabus. It has been found that the most dominant process is material, represented by verbs such as 'compare', 'contrast', and 'move'. The relational process is ranked second and observed in the three verbs 'including', 'is', and 'having'. The mental process is observed and represented only the verb 'recognize', while the verbal process is observed and represented solely by the verb 'illustrate'.

#### 4.1.4 ENG 340: “English language cultural studies”

In the ENG340 syllabus, four transitivity process types are identified: material, mental, relational, and verbal. The material process is the most common, accounting for 73.68% of all processes. The mental process is ranked second, accounting for 15.79%. The relational process accounted for 7.89% of the total, ranking third, while the verbal process ranks last at 2.63%. Table 8 shows the distribution of process types in the ENG340 syllabus.

**Table 8: Distribution of process types in ENG340 syllabus**

Process types	Frequencies	Percentage
Material	28	73.68%
Mental	6	15.79%
Verbal	1	2.63%
Relational	3	7.89%
Total	38	100%

Table 9 (see appendix 4) displays the transitivity analysis of process types used in the ENG340 syllabus. The material process is the most dominant, represented by verbs such as ‘explore’, ‘survey’, and ‘examine’. The mental process is ranked second and observed in verbs such as ‘identify’, ‘recognize’, and ‘infer’. The relational process is only identified in three verbs: ‘including’, ‘is’, and ‘having’, while the verbal process is only found in one verb (‘interpret’).

### 4.2 Transitivity process types in the second level of the third-year course syllabi

#### 4.2.1 ENG 350: “Introduction to semantics and pragmatics”

In the ENG350 syllabus, four types of transitivity processes are recognized: material, mental, verbal, and relational. The material process is the most dominant, accounting for 65.79% of the total. The percentages for mental and verbal processes are relatively close: mental process accounts for 15.79%, and verbal process accounts for 10.53%. The relational process is the least used type, accounting for 7.89%. Table 10 shows the distribution of the process types in the ENG350 syllabus.

**Table 10: Distribution of process types in ENG350 syllabus**

Process types	Frequencies	Percentage
Material	25	65.79%
Mental	6	15.79%
Verbal	4	10.53%
Relational	3	7.89%
Total	38	100%

Table 11 (see appendix 5) presents the transitivity analysis of process types used in the ENG 350 syllabus. The material process is the most dominant, evident in verbs such as ‘examines’, ‘describes’, and ‘explores’. The mental process ranks second, represented by verbs like ‘considers’, ‘assesses’, and ‘understanding’. The verbal and relational processes occur at similar frequencies. The verbal process is represented by the four verbs ‘said’ and ‘implied’; each appears twice. The relational process is represented by three verbs: ‘is’, ‘including’, and ‘having’.

#### 4.2.2 ENG 360: “Discourse analysis and text-linguistics”

In the ENG360 syllabus, four types of transitivity processes are recognized: material, mental, verbal, and relational. The material process is the most dominant, accounting for 55% of the processes, followed by the mental process at 36.11%. The verbal and relational processes have relatively close percentages, at 2.78% and 5.56%, respectively. Table 12 illustrates the distribution of these four process types in the syllabus.

**Table 12: Distribution of process types in ENG360 syllabus**

Process types	Frequencies	Percentage
Material	20	55 %
Mental	13	36.11%
Verbal	1	2.78%
Relational	2	5.56%

Total	36	100%
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Table 13 (see appendix 6) presents the transitivity analysis of the process types used in ENG360. The most dominant process is the material process, represented by verbs such as ‘explores’, ‘characterize’, and ‘incorporate’. The mental process is ranked second, represented by verbs such as ‘identify’, ‘evaluate’, and ‘analyze’. The relational and verbal processes have relatively close frequencies, with the relational process represented only by the two verbs ‘including’ and ‘having’, and the verbal process represented by the single verb (‘discusses’).

### 4.2.3 ENG 380: “Stylistics”

In the ENG380 syllabus, four types of transitivity processes are identified: material, mental, verbal, and relational. The material process is the most dominant, making up 65.38% of the processes, with the mental process following at 26.92%. Both the verbal and relational processes constitute 3.85% each. Table 14 displays the distribution of these process types in the ENG380 syllabus.

**Table 14: Distribution of process types in ENG380 syllabus**

Process types	Frequencies	Percentage
Material	17	65.38%
Mental	7	26.92%
Verbal	1	3.85%
Relational	1	3.85%
Total	26	100%

Table 15 (see appendix 7) shows the transitivity analysis of process types used in ENG380. The most dominant process is the material process, represented by verbs such as ‘addresses’, ‘explores’, and ‘creates’. The mental process is ranked second, represented by verbs such as ‘identify’, ‘recognize’, and ‘analyze’. The verbal process is indicated only by the verb ‘explain’, while the relational process is represented solely by the verb (‘having’).

Overall, Table 16 summarizes the transitivity process types identified in the fifth and sixth-level third-year course syllabi. It is important to note that only five out of the six transitivity process types are present in the investigated syllabi. The material, mental, and relational processes are consistently observed across all syllabi, with the material process being the most dominant, followed by the mental and relational processes. The verbal process is identified in six out of the seven syllabi, with the exception of the ENG301 syllabus. Furthermore, the behavioral process is exclusively observed in the ENG310 syllabus.

**Table 16: Process types frequencies and percentages in the fifth and sixth levels of the third-year course syllabi**

Level	Fifth level				Sixth level			
Course / Type	ENG301	ENG310	ENG320	ENG340	ENG350	ENG360	ENG380	Total
<b>Material</b>	20	28	29	28	25	20	17	167
	74.07%	62.22%	85.29%	73.68%	65.79%	55 %	65.38%	68.44%
<b>Mental</b>	3	11	1	6	6	13	7	47
	11.11%	24.44%	2.94%	15.79%	15.79%	36.11%	26.92%	19.26%
<b>Verbal</b>	0	2	1	1	4	1	1	10
	0%	4.44%	2.94%	2.63%	10.53%	2.78%	3.85%	4.10%
<b>Relational</b>	4	3	3	3	3	2	1	19
	14.81%	6.67%	8.82%	7.89%	7.89%	5.56%	3.85%	7.78%
Behavioral	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	0%	2.22%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.42%
<b>TOTAL</b>	27	45	34	38	38	36	26	244
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

## 5. DISCUSSION

Courses taught in sequences with the goal of preparing students for the demands of college are known as developmental education courses, or sometimes referred to as “gatekeepers” (Bowers-Campbell, 2015). It makes sense that instructors are looking into ways to enhance results,



considering how a number of students succeed in these classes. Examining additional aspects of developmental courses that might affect students' success is just as vital as looking at the course's content, pace, and delivery method (Bowers-Campbell, 2015). Thus, investigating academic documents including a syllabus is important since such documents constitute a distinct area of study (Prior, 2003).

For this study, the systemic functional grammar theory has been employed (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) to examine process types of transitivity analysis of the academic syllabi of third-year courses within the Bachelor of English Language and Translation program at SEU. Hence, this research aims at investigating seven English course syllabuses of the third-year levels. To pinpoint and evaluate the process types of transitivity analysis of the English department syllabi in this specific level, a comparison of the transitivity process types has been undertaken. This analysis of process types has been emphasized as described by the verbs provided in the seven academic syllabuses. Based on transitivity theory, verbs are vital components of a clause since such verbs can express participants' roles as well as the functionality of a circumstance in which discourse can be generated and carried out (Renkema, 2004). Specifically, seven academic syllabuses involve the fifth and sixth levels of the program, examining four of the seven syllabi from the fifth level and three from the sixth level of the third-year levels.

Primarily, material process type (68.44%) is mostly used in the seven academic syllabi; this encodes actions to be done by individuals and events in an objective manner. Mental process (19.26%), the second most predominant type, highlights students' awareness and comprehension of the material employed in the seven course syllabuses. Interestingly, almost 90 percent of all ranking clauses are composed of these two sorts of processes. Relational process type (7.78%), despite its low percentage, helps to characterize and identify information, making it possible for readers and learners to comprehend the data and knowledge offered in the seven course syllabuses. As for verbal process type (4.10%), it is interested in "narrative creation" (Zheng, 2021, p. 15). It is important to note that Alhumsi et al. (2021) stressed that verbal process analysis looks at the document and its author and how they can influence and persuade readers. Behavioral process type (0.42) is the lowest percentage indicating that awareness and actions should be mainly accentuated and expressed in understanding the syllabus document. For example, Halliday et al. (2004) confirmed that the behavioral process types "represent outer manifestations of inner workings, the acting out of processes of consciousness and physiological states" (p.215). However, the seven course syllabuses witnessed the absence of the existential process type. Such results go in line with studies such as Alhumsi and Alsaedi (2023), Alhumsi et al. (2021), Cheikh (2017), and Zhao and Zhang (2017). These studies highlighted the dominant part of the material process recorded as the most frequent type compared to other processes found in the academic course syllabuses.

## **6. CONCLUSION AND FURTHER STUDIES**

The aim of this study was to analyze the transitivity processes that are illustrated in the syllabi of seven third-year English courses in the Bachelor of English Language and Translation program at SEU. The investigation was analyzed using the systemic functional grammar theory of Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). The investigation focused on the identification and assessment of process categories by analyzing the verbs existing in the syllabi. The results indicated that the material process type was the most frequently used, accounting for 68.44% of the processes. This implies a significant emphasis on actions and events. Relational and verbal processes, at 7.78% and 4.10%, respectively, also played substantial roles in conveying information and narrative, albeit to a lesser extent. Mental processes, which made up 19.26% of the processes, underscored students' awareness and comprehension. It is noteworthy that the existential process type was entirely absent, while the behavioral process type was only marginally present. This study has significantly highlighted the prominence of material processes in scholarly discourse.

The influence of developmental education courses on student progress is a topic of great interest with considerable implications. Hence, this study pinpoints the importance of considering both material and mental processes in course syllabi, as well as the need for practical tasks in course design. It is important for teachers to expand the range of procedural categories to offer students a more comprehensive education. The study also emphasizes the importance of syllabi in the content

of courses, as they have a significant impact on students' comprehension and engagement. This underscores the importance of academic publications as a valuable field of study, which includes curriculum development. This study accentuates the significance of incorporating practical activities into course design and recognizing the value of both content and cognitive processes in course syllabi. Teachers should consider incorporating a broader range of procedural categories to offer students a more comprehensive learning experience. The significance of course syllabi in the curriculum cannot be ignored, as they greatly impact students' understanding and engagement. Integrating a diverse array of process categories into the curriculum can improve student performance in the classroom and better equip them for the challenges of higher education.

However, it is important to recognize the limitations of this study. One aspect to keep in mind is the limited sample size, as it includes only seven courses from a single university's program curriculum. Expanding the sample to include a wider variety of programs and institutions could lead to a more comprehensive study. Furthermore, the study focused solely on transitivity processes in the curriculum, disregarding other parts of systemic functional grammar such as mood and modality that can influence students' comprehension and academic achievement. Future research should take these additional factors into account to have a better understanding of the ways that language use in the curriculum affects students' learning outcomes.

Future research could consider larger samples such as examining syllabi of the whole program courses, not only one year of the program as this could be the limitation of the current study. Another aspect recommended for future research is investigating the circumstances and participants' roles, as they are essential elements of the transitivity system because this study focused on the process types of the transitivity system. In addition, future research could consider further investigating the syllabi of other program courses in other departments.

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### Appendix (1)

**Table 3: Transitivity analysis of process types adopted in ENG 301 syllabus**

Participant	Process	Participant	Circumstance
	Material (is designed)	Goal (This course)	
Actor (this course)	Material (introduce)	Goal (students)	to the study of language
	Material (is provided)	Goal (students)	with an introduction
	Material (implement)	Goal (experiential)	
	Material (are encouraged)	Goal (students)	
	Material (engage)		actively in discussion
Actor (written assignments)	Material (examine)	Goal (the basic techniques)	in the subfield of contemporary linguistics
Actor (students)	Material (describe)	Goal (the nature of human language)	
Actor (it)	Material (is used)		
Actor (it)	Material (works)		
	Material (introduce)	Goal (students)	To some of innovative ...
Actor (linguists)	Material (use)	Goal (methods)	
	Material (investigate)	Goal (language properties)	
Actor(students)	Material (apply)	Goal (the basic rules...)	
Actor (the student)	Material (follow)	Goal (attendance)	
Actor (the university)	Material (given)		
Actor (the students)	Material (read)	Goal (all announcements)	
Actor (the instructor)	Material (posted)		
Actor (any student)	Material (contact)	Goal ((the instructor)	
Actor (students)	Material (contact)	Goal (the instructor)	
Senser (students)	Mental (distinguish)	Phenomenon (various linguistic systems)	
	Mental (analyze)	Phenomenon (the study of different ...)	
Senser (any student)	Mental (understanding)	Phenomenon (his handout)	
	Relational (including)	Attribute (phonology, morphology, ...)	
Carrier (it)	Relational (is)		
Carrier (the student)	Relational (is)	Attribute (responsible)	
Possessor (Any student)	Relational (having)	Possessed (difficulty)	

## Appendix (2)

**Table 5: Transitivity analysis of process types adopted in ENG 310 syllabus**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>
Actor (This course)	Material (provides)	Goal (students)	with an introduction
Actor (principles of glossary)	Material (are exposed)	Goal (students)	Throughout this course
	Material (are trained)	Goal (students)	
Actor (students)	Material (use)	Goal (a dictionary)	skillfully
	Material (selecting)	Goal (the right type of dictionary)	
	Material (look up)	Goal (words)	rapidly
	Material (used)		in dictionaries
	Material (will be placed)	Goal (special emphasis)	
Actor (how dictionaries)	Material (can help enable)	Goal (correct pronunciation)	via phonetic transcription...
	Material (will be trained)	Goal (students)	in the use and formation
	Material (is presented)	Goal (the way)	
	Material (assembling)	Goal (words)	
	Material (will be taught)	Goal (students)	
	Material (is presented)	Goal (information)	in a dictionary
	Material (can be classified)	Goal (dictionaries)	
	Material (represented)		in a dictionary
	Material (presented)	Goal (information)	in a dictionary
	Material (classified)	Goal (dictionaries)	
Actor (students)	Material (will be able to demonstrate)	Goal (knowledge of the history...)	
Actor (students)	Material (demonstrate)	Goal (un understanding of elements...)	
Actor (students)	Material (demonstrate)	Goal (un understanding of key elements...)	
	Material (represented)	Goal (meaning)	in a dictionary
Actor (students)	Material (must follow)	Goal (attendance policy)	
Actor (the university)	Material (given)		
	Material (read)	Goal (all announcements)	
Actor (the instructor)	Material (posted)		

Actor (any student)	Material (contact)	Goal (the instructor)	
Actor (students)	Material (contact)	Goal (the instructor)	
Senser (students)	Mental (understand)	Phenomenon (primary, secondary, ...)	in translation
Senser (students)	Mental (recognize)	Phenomenon (typology and ...)	
Senser (students)	Mental (analyze)	Phenomenon (the techniques...)	
Senser (students)	Mental (identify)	Phenomenon (grammatical problems)	in a bilingual dictionary
Senser (students)	Mental (assess)	Phenomenon (semantic problems)	in a bilingual dictionary
Senser (any student)	Mental (recognize)	Phenomenon (typology and component structures)	
Sensor (students)	Mental (understand)	Phenomenon (the history of English...)	
Sensor (students)	Mental (analyze)	Phenomenon (the techniques)	
Sensor (students)	Mental (identify)	Phenomenon (grammatical problems)	in a bilingual dictionary
Sensor (students)	Mental (assess)	Phenomenon (semantic problems)	in the choice of equivalents meaning ....
Sensor (any student)	Mental (understanding)	Phenomenon (this handout)	
	Verbal (can be explained)	Verbiage (meaning)	
	Verbal (can be explained)	Verbiage (meaning)	in a dictionary
	Relational (including)	Attribute (the relationship)	between prefixes and suffixes...
Carrier (The student)	Relational (is)	Attribute (responsible)	
Possessor (Any student)	Relational (having)	Possessed (difficulty)	
Behaver (It)	Behavioral (acquaints)	Range (students)	With different types

### Appendix (3)

**Table 7: Transitivity analysis of process types adopted in ENG 320 syllabus.**

Participant	Process	Participant	Circumstance
Actor (students)	Material (will learn)	Goal (students)	In this course
	Material (compare)	Goal (Arabic and English)	
	Material (contrast)	Goal (Arabic and English)	in a systematic and principled manner
Actor (This course)	Material (focuses on)	Goal (how similar notions)	
	Material (are encoded)	Goal (how similar notions)	grammatically in different languages
Actor (This course)	Material (enables)	Goal (students)	
	Material (move)		Smoothly between English ...
	Material (will be given)	Goal (students)	During this course
	Material (comparing)		according to grammatical principles
	Material (contrasting)		
	Material (formulating)		
	Material (translating)	Goal (Arabic and English...)	
Actor (this course)	Material (focuses on)	Goal (constructions)	such as open-ended parts...
Actor (This course)	Material (introduces)	Goal (the processes)	in a systematic and principled manner
Actor (the present course)	Material (compares)	Goal (Arabic and English)	in various constructions
Actor (students)	Material (should be able to compare and contrast)	Goal (Arabic and English constructions)	At the end of the course
Actor (students)	Material (describe)	Goal (existing similarities or differences)	between Arabic and English constructions
	Material (translate)	Goal (Arabic and English sentences)	
	Material (paying)	Goal (special attention)	in each language
Actor (students)	Material (demonstrate)	Goal (skills)	
	Material (overcoming)	Goal (the word for word approach)	
	Material (finding)	Goal (equivalent English sentences)	for Arabic sentences and vice versa
Actor (students)	Material (translate)	Goal (sentences)	from Arabic to English and vice versa correctly



Actor (the student)	Material (must follow)	Goal (attendance policy)	
Actor (the university)	Material (given)		
Actor (the student)	Material (read)	Goal (all announcements)	
Actor (the instructor)	Material (posted)		
Actor (any student)	Material (should contact)	Goal (the instructor)	for clarifications
Actor (students)	Material (should contact)	Goal (the instructor)	For all enquiries
Senser (students)	Mental (recognize)	Phenomenon (common constructions)	in Arabic and English
	Verbal (illustrate)	Verbiage (the similarities and differences)	between Arabic and English constructions.
	Relational (including)	Attribute (open-ended and closed-ended parts of speech)	
Carrier (The student)	Relational (is)	Attribute (responsible)	
Possessor (Any student)	Relational (having)	Possessed (difficulty)	

### Appendix (4)

**Table 9: Transitivity analysis of process types adopted in ENG 340 syllabus.**

Participant	Process	Participant	Circumstance
Actor (This course)	Material (explore)	Goal (the relationship)	between language and culture
Actor (It)	Material (surveys)	Goal (the social and cultural contexts...)	
Actor (both)	Material (play)	Goal (a critical role)	in the process of translation
Actor (This course)	Material (examines)	Goal (how a human language)	
Actor (a human language)	Material (reflects)	Goal (the ways of life and beliefs...)	
Actor (this course)	Material (contrasts)	Goal (this)	with the extent of a language's influence on culture
	Material (are examined)	Goal (A wide variety of English cultures)	in this course
Actor (this course)	Material (covers)	Goal (basic linguistic...)	
Actor (this course)	Material (focuses on)	Goal (English culture and its implications...)	in the era of global English
	Material (embedded)	Goal (how key cultural values)	in language use
Actor (This course)	Material (provides)	Goal (the students)	with the fundamentals of cultural studies....
Actor (students)	Material (will be able to determine)	Goal (the scope and limitations...)	between culture and language
	Material (depending on)	Goal (various contexts)	
	Material (overcome)	Goal (the barriers)	in English language translation
	Material (reflect on)	Goal (the value)	
	Material (respecting)	Goal (cultures and languages)	
	Material (appreciating)	Goal (one's culture and language)	
	Material (related to)	Goal (cultural differences)	
Actor (students)	Material (describe)	Goal (language and culture)	within different contexts
	Material (involved)	Goal (in translating to and from English)	in today's world
Actor (culture)	Material (manifests)	Goal (itself)	

Actor (the students)	Material (demonstrate)	Goal (appreciation and respect)	for other cultures and languages
Actor (the student)	Material (must follow)	Goal (attendance policy)	
Actor (the university)	Material (given)		
Actor (the student)	Material (read)	Goal (all announcements)	
Actor (the instructor)	Material (posted)		
Actor (any student)	Material (should contact)	Goal (the instructor)	for clarifications
Actor (students)	Material (should contact)	Goal (the instructor)	For all enquiries
Senser (the students)	Mental (identify)	Phenomenon (the characteristics of culture and language)	
Senser (students)	Mental (infer)	Phenomenon (different ways)	
	Mental (recognize)	Phenomenon (the importance ...)	
	Mental (appreciating)	Phenomenon (one's culture and language)	
Senser (the students)	Mental (recognize)	Phenomenon (the links)	between culture and language
Senser (the students)	Mental (identify)	Phenomenon (the challenges)	
Sayer (the students)	Verbal (interpret)	Verbiage (culture)	in all its complex forms
	Relational (including)	Attribute (language patterning, preferred mode of...)	
Carrier (The student)	Relational (is)	Attribute (responsible)	
Possessor (Any student)	Relational (having)	Possessed (difficulty)	

### Appendix (5)

**Table 11: Transitivity analysis of process types adopted in ENG 350 syllabus.**

Participant	Process	Participant	Circumstance
Actor (This course)	Material (examines)	Goal (the semantic dimensions of meaning)	in language
Actor (it)	Material (addresses)	Goal (how we use lexical...)	
	Material (express)	Goal (meaning)	
Actor (semantic factors)	Material (influence)	Goal (our choice)	in social interactions
Actor (how our choices)	Material (affect)	Goal (other language users)	
	Material (describe)	Goal (meaning)	in human language
Actor (This course)	Material (explores)	Goal (various related issues)	
	Material (involved)	Goal (in the study of logic...)	
Actor (students)	Material (will be able to demonstrate)	Goal (knowledge of significant theories)	
	Material (are related to)	Goal (syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations...)	
Actor (This course)	Material (is used to)	Goal (language)	
Actor (students)	Material (perform)	Goal (direct and indirect speech acts)	
Actor (students)	Material (differentiate)		between what is explicitly...
	Material (involved in)	Goal (the study of semantics...)	
	Material (demonstrate)	Goal (knowledge of significant...)	
	Material (focus on)	Goal (semantics and pragmatics)	
	Material (is used to)	Goal (language)	
	Material (perform)	Goal (speech acts)	
Actor (students)	Material (differentiate)		
Actor (the student)	Material (must follow)	Goal (attendance policy)	
Actor (the university)	Material (given)		
Actor (the student)	Material (read)	Goal (all announcements)	
Actor (the instructor)	Material (posted)		
Actor (any student)	Material (should contact)	Goal (the instructor)	for clarifications
Actor (students)	Material (should contact)	Goal (the instructor)	For all enquiries

	Mental (considers)	Phenomenon (how semantic factors)	
Senser (students)	Mental (will be able to recognize)	Phenomenon (key issues)	
Senser (students)	Mental (assess)	Phenomenon (how language)	
Senser (students)	Mental (recognize)	Phenomenon (key issues)	in the study of semantics and pragmatics
Senser (students)	Mental (assess)	Phenomenon (language)	
	Mental (understanding)	Phenomenon (this handout)	
	Verbal (said)		Between what is explicitly said and what is implied explicitly
	Verbal (implied)		
	Verbal (said)		
	Verbal (implied)		
Identified (the general theme)	Relational (is)	Identifier (how best to...)	
	Relational (including)	Attribute (word meaning...)	
Possessor (Any student)	Relational (having)	Possessed (difficulty)	

### Appendix (6)

**Table 13: Transitivity analysis of process types adopted in ENG 360 syllabus.**

Participant	Process	Participant	Circumstance
Actor (This course)	Material (explores)	Goal (how language)	according to subject area...
Actor (language)	Material (varies)		
	Material (examining)	Goal (the workings of various form...)	
Actor (The course)	Material (presents)	Goal (several descriptive ...)	to the structure and function of spoken...
	Material (involved)	Goal (issues)	in discourse analysis
	Material (Focusing on)	Goal (the study of texts and...)	
Actor (this course)	Material (is interested)		in semantic structure
Actor (students)	Material (will develop)	Goal (a critical awareness of the linguistic...)	By the end of this course
	Material (characterize)	Goal (speakers' and writers' interpersonal stances)	in various social settings
Actor (student)	Material (classify)	Goal (various genres)	
	Material (used)		in texts
	Material (written and occurring)	Goal (discourse)	
Actor (communicative occurrences)	Material (incorporate)	Goal (text-presented Knowledge)	with one's stored knowledge...
	Material (operating)		in particular social settings
Actor (the student)	Material (must follow)	Goal (attendance policy)	
Actor (the university)	Material (given)		
Actor (the student)	Material (read)	Goal (all announcements)	
Actor (the instructor)	Material (posted)		
Actor (any student)	Material (should contact)	Goal (the instructor)	for clarifications
Actor (students)	Material (should contact)	Goal (the instructor)	For all enquiries
Senser (students)	Mental (will be able to recognize)	Phenomenon (the properties of different texts)	
Senser (students)	Mental (identify)	Phenomenon (various genres or text types)	

Senser (students)	Mental (grasp)	Phenomenon (the general features...)	
	Mental (evaluate)	Phenomenon (written materials)	in the field of discourse...
Senser (students)	Mental (recognize)	Phenomenon (the implications of social...)	in the interpretation of meaning...
Senser (students)	Mental (analyze)	Phenomenon (English texts)	according to the seven principles of textuality
Senser (students)	Mental (recognize)	Phenomenon (linguistic units)	in texts
Senser (students)	Mental (recognize)	Phenomenon (the implications of social)	in both written and naturally occurring discourse
Senser (students)	Mental (recognize)	Phenomenon (texts)	
Senser (students)	Mental (identify)	Phenomenon (various genres...)	
Senser (students)	Mental (analyze)	Phenomenon (English texts)	according to the seven...
Senser (students)	Mental (evaluate)	Phenomenon (written materials)	in the field of discourse...
	Mental (understanding)	Phenomenon (this handout)	
Sayer (the course)	Verbal (discusses)	Verbiage (Various models)	
	Relational (including)	Attribute (cohesion, coherence, ...)	
Possessor (Any student)	Relational (having)	Possessed (difficulty)	

## Appendix (7)

**Table 15: Transitivity analysis of process types adopted in ENG 380 syllabus.**

Participant	Process	Participant	Circumstance
Actor (This course)	Material (addresses)	Goal (the linguistic analysis...)	Between linguistic choices...
	Material (explores)	Goal (the relationship)	
	Material (focusing on)	Goal (three literary genres...)	
Actor (students)	Material (examine)	Goal (how language)	.
	Material (creates)	Goal (meaning and effect)	
Actor (students)	Material (will be able to demonstrate)	Goal (an understanding of the methods...)	
Actor (students)	Material (uncover)	Goal (the layers, patterns...)	
Actor (layers...)	Material (constitute)	Goal (stylistic description)	
Actor (students)	Material (develop)	Goal (a set of stylistic...)	
	Material (can be applied)		to any text
	Material (using)	Goal (the principles and tools...)	
Actor (the student)	Material (must follow)	Goal (attendance policy)	
Actor (the university)	Material (given)		
Actor (the student)	Material (read)	Goal (all announcements)	
Actor (the instructor)	Material (posted)		
Actor (any student)	Material (should contact)	Goal (the instructor)	for clarifications
Actor (students)	Material (should contact)	Goal (the instructor)	For all enquiries
Senser (students)	Mental (will assess)	Phenomenon (the relationship)	between style and stylistics
Senser (students)	Mental (will be able to analyze)	Phenomenon (texts)	beyond their formal features
Senser (students)	Mental (recognize)	Phenomenon (the fundamental principles...)	
Senser (students)	Mental (identify)	Phenomenon (linguistic levels)	in stylistic analysis
Senser (students)	Mental (identify)	Phenomenon (stylistic devices)	in various literary texts...
Senser (students)	Mental (analyze)	Phenomenon (various types of texts)	
	Mental (understanding)	Phenomenon (this handout)	
Sayer (students)	Verbal (explain)	Verbiage (the relationship)	between writers' linguistic choices...
Possessor (Any student)	Relational (having)	Possessed (difficulty)	