

Original Paper

“And Jesus began to teach”: A Transitivity Analysis of *The Parable of the Sower*

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Abstract

Religious discourse offers significant value for linguistic analysis. Functional analysis of religious texts provides a lexico-semantic approach to interpreting these discourses, though it remains underexplored in the literature. To fill this gap, the study undertook a functional analysis of the Parable of the Sower within the framework of transitivity. A mixed-method approach was employed. The text was taken from the Modern English Version (MEV) (Mark 4:1-20). The process types and their participants and the worldview of the parable were analysed within the framework. The material process type dominated the text, occurring 42 times. This was followed by the relational, mental, verbal and behavioural process types. The actor participant dominated the data. The text is highly action-oriented with the world of the text concerned with happenings, movements and tangible actions. The worldview of the parable could be described as: the nature of Christians upon receiving the word and instructions towards bearing fruits. Enthusiasm, materialism, double-minded and being stressed characterize the nature of Christians upon receiving the word while commitment, focus, steadfastness and faithfulness represent the instructions towards seed bearing. The textual and interpersonal metafunctions of language should be employed to consolidate the findings presented in this paper.

Keywords

systemic functional grammar, transitivity system, process type, parable, religion

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Language is a communication medium with several purposes. Language exists in society, and vice versa (Adeyanju, 2002). Anyone who utilizes language does so in a way that allows them to do tasks with it; to make choices that express their original intended meaning or objective. Language is undeniably an instrument for meaning construction (Awuku, 2018), and it is also regarded as a social practice rather than just a way to communicate (Wood & Kroger, 2000). Halliday (1985, p. 14) defined language as “a system of meanings, accompanied by forms through which the meanings can be realized and answer the question, ‘How are these meanings expressed?’” As a result, language is considered to be functional instead of only formal.

Language’s multiple purposes are evident in its employment in numerous parts of society, including the press, medicine, entertainment, academia, law, politics, and other areas. Language, according to Mwinwelle, Adukpo and Mwinwelle (2019), is adaptable and has elastic edges, allowing individuals to modify it to interpret their cognitions or thoughts. Language is used by society to unite its members in the pursuit of a common purpose. Mwinwelle, Amoakohene and Agyekum (2020) argue that bigger and smaller groups share common basic values and norms through linguistic articulation. According to Halliday (1978), language is regulated by social structures, which are perpetuated and conveyed via language, making language extremely important in the matters of every speech society.

Religion is one part of humanity that makes extensive use of language. Religious language users employ language to persuade, soothe, teach, and instruct, but principally to force and win over new converts (Awuku, 2018). As a result, users of religious language prefer to employ language in a functional fashion that aids them in achieving their goals. With these objectives, intents, and ideas in mind, people create language choices that support their expected desire. Language, among other things, expresses religion by displaying religious ideals, rituals, and traditions (Balraj, Singh & Abd Manan, 2020).

The language of religion is a type of language that purports to communicate metaphysical truths in a way that differs from the conventional language of everyday human existence (Naeem, Andleeb, Nadvi, Umar, Shabir & Shabir, 2014). The tone of most religious conversations is sombre since the goal is to summon and exalt a certain deity as well as to perform a specific activity or deed (Lamidi, 2005; Omolafe, 1992). The purpose of language is to allow communication so that beneficial, appropriate, and expected action may occur (Bankole & Ayoola, 2014). Religion, according to Keane (1997), is predicated on subjective impressions of an unseen presence, which renders the methodology of religious studies subjective as well. Subjective experiences are rendered credible through language to develop particular religious dispositions in worshipers (Rafael, 1992). A linguistic study of religious texts gives an objective approach to investigating the text’s underlying meanings and establishing the foundation for believers’ activities.

The objectives of linguistic analysis range from linguistic entities at the phonological level to discourse-level discourses. The clausal element is an important part of linguistic analysis as it encodes the experiences, intentions, and goals of speakers or writers. The grammar of the phrase conveys Halliday's (1994, p. 106) idea of reality as "goings-on: of doing, happening, feeling, being". As a result, Halliday and Mathiessen (2014) show that the value of experiences and events is communicated through the usage of the clause. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), which is centred on meaning and language as a social phenomenon, accurately defines the roles of language in texts.

According to Eggins (2004), transitivity aids in explaining how the field of the situation is built, such as in expressing what is being discussed and how changes in the field are accomplished. The transitivity system is a key aspect of language that allows humans to construct a mental image of reality and create meaning of what is going on within and around them (Halliday, 1994). The framework expresses speakers' experiences through six process types: mental, material, relational, verbal, existential, and behavioural (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2014). Transitivity investigates the value of clauses through a process that unfolds through time, the participants throughout the process, as well as the circumstances connected with the process (Journal, Ranti & Nurmaily, 2021; Suprayogi, 2021).

The application of transitivity analysis indicates that language patterns may create meanings and ideologies that are not always obvious to readers of texts and listeners of spoken language. A functional analysis of language aids in determining the relationship among layers of meaning and phraseology that account for the assembly of linguistic forms in a text. A speaker or writer can encode his or her experiences of the actual world and the world of their awareness inside this framework (Herman, Thao & Purba, 2020).

Halliday's framework of transitivity, a theory of SFG, has extensively been employed by scholars to explore language and meaning in different texts. Mwinlaaru and Nartey (2021), Cunanan (2011), Nguyen (2012) and Mwinwelle et al. (2020) have applied the framework to study literary texts, Adjei and Ewusi-Mensah (2016) and Al Faki (2014) have studied political texts using the framework, media texts have also been studied using the framework by Bonney (2008), Bartley (2017) has studied legal texts using the framework, while religious texts have also been studied within the transitivity framework by Quainoo (2011), Andreescu (2021), Ningrum (2022) and Ngongo, Maromon, Loba and Herman (2022).

A plethora of studies that have investigated language and meaning in various texts utilizing functional theories, notably SFG, highlight its efficacy in conceptualizing a text as social interaction. Texts, according to systemic linguists, are communicative behaviour, meaning formation, and an interpersonal matrix wherein all social interactions occur (Dik, 1989; Eggins, 1994; Halliday, 1994). A functional analysis of language and meaning is necessary to completely expose the experiences of authors and speakers, as well as their view of their real world within and around them. The meaning provided by someone, which is often based on the person's experience, may be comprehended through clause

analysis.

The transitivity system is seen as a useful theory for revealing the meaning contained in religious writings such as parables that are directed specifically to Christians. Most linguistic studies of religious texts have focused on surface qualities of religious language while ignoring the underlying themes that form and disseminate ideology to individuals who rely on religious discourse for meaning and ethical guidance (Ingold, 2014). Systemic linguists can emphasize the meaning and experiences perceived in religious texts by employing functional theories. This investigation gives a more in-depth lexico-semantic approach to religious writings and a better understanding of the instructions provided in the materials.

1.2 Problem Statement

Recent research investigating the interaction between language and faith has gained a great deal of scholarly attention. Religious discourse, according to Adjei, Ewusi-Mensah and Logogye (2016), is noteworthy because it includes considerable linguistic value for study. Systemic linguists have used functional analysis to investigate the relationship between language and religion. Extensive examination of religious texts and materials has shown the linguistic structure of these discourses, revealing the internal representation inherent in the texts. Sermons (Kurniani, 2017; Ningrum, 2022; Quainoo, 2011), biblical texts (Adjei et al., 2016; Andreescu, 2021; Awuku, 2018; Ngongo et al., 2022), faith-based and related materials such as songs and magazines (Ingold, 2014) have been the corpus of many recent functional linguistic studies. A functional approach to religious studies provides an objective understanding of the subjective experiences that characterize religious discourse.

Parables are one sort of religious literature that has received little attention within the context of functional analysis. Short stories that communicate spiritual truth, moral teachings, and religious ideas are known as parables. These stories draw numerous parallels to everyday life (Booth, 2005). They are earthy tales with celestial significance. Parables, as the Bible puts it, "...these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: that it might be fulfill which was spoken by the prophet..." (Matt 13:34-35) and because "...it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matt. 13:10-11). The Holy Bible has thirty-two (32) parables which speak about the kingdom, forgiveness, love for one's neighbour, prayer, self-righteousness and humility, discipleship, invitation of God, repentance, future preparation and individual responsibility.

Though religious discourse has high linguistic relevance for analysis, and functional analysis of religious texts provides a lexico-semantic method to interpreting these discourses, parables have received little attention within this framework. Systemic analysis of parables must thus investigate the use of language and the experiences enshrined in these stories. Graber (2001) undertook a functional analysis of the *Parable of the Sower*. However, the application of the transitivity framework to the study of parables remains an underexplored field. To address this void in the literature, the study

attempts to investigate the grammatical choices of the *Parable of the Sower* within the transitivity framework, an SFG theory.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The study aims to explore the grammatical choices of *The Parable of the Sower* by considering the roles assigned and the process types used by Jesus, the leader of Christianity.

1.4 Objectives

- i. To identify the process types in *The Parable of the Sower*.
- ii. To examine the worldview of *The Parable of the Sower* through the transitivity patterns.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The grammatical choices employed by speakers are resources through which a text could be comprehended. A study of such nature would inform and instruct religious leaders specifically on the need to be constructive in their linguistic choices to shape and share both their inner and outer world experiences. The study will become a reference point for researchers who focus on exploring language and religion. Literature will also be served to improve evidence on SFG and grammatical choices of religious texts through functional (transitivity) perspective. The evidence of the study would heighten attention to the availability of the Bible as a corpus for linguistic studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)

M. A. K. Halliday conceived SFG as part of a social semiotic linguistic approach. Butt, Fahey and Feez (2000) define SFG as a linguistic theory that asserts that language or any other semantic system may be seen as a network of choices. In other words, when writers or speakers employ language, they make decisions that are impacted by a variety of circumstances. These elements encompass their perception of the world surrounding them, the subject of discourse, and whom they might be discussing it with. SFG, as a theory, provides insight into the structure of language and the way it functions.

As other grammars, including structural grammars, are concerned with the rules for constructing grammatically sound forms, SFG is concerned with grammar's functionality—how grammar can be employed to analyze text (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). According to Halliday, his goal has been to build a grammar for the purposes of textual analysis: one that would allow us to say meaningful and helpful things about every text, in spoken or written form, in current English (Halliday, 1994). SFG takes use of the premise that sense is transferred than what is spoken or printed and attempts to decode underlying meaning. As seen by Teo (2000), this meaning is based on the speaker's choices from the possibilities inside the linguistic structure or, in certain situations, judgments derived from what is not selected.

The interpretation of texts that SFG attempts to decode is governed by cultural context, situational context, and metafunctions. The cultural context shows the entire cultural background underpinning texts and aids in putting words into right perspective (Quainoo, 2011). Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) define situational context as realized by mode (textual), field (experiential), and tenor (interpersonal), which are the organization of the information, representation of world view, and interaction among participants.

Metafunction, in the context of SFG, is a construct that relates to how language works differently but concurrently in a text (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The metafunctions are presented in terms of textual, which creates a link between the structure of text or language and the nature of the context where it is used; ideational, which talks about the depiction of the speaker's everyday experience of occurrences from within outside of them; and interpersonal, which creates and keeps social relationships within and between interactants. The current investigation is situated within the ideational metafunction, which comprises processes, participants, and circumstances. These three characteristics are described via options in the transitivity system, which is used to depict the world of experiences via process types.

2.1.2 Transitivity System

According to Halliday (2014), transitivity is associated with ideational meaning or clause as representation. Transitivity is a linguistic resource used to understand thoughts and experiences as they occur in the course of events. It is the way through which the meanings of events and experiences are communicated by the use of clauses (Halliday & Mathiessien, 2014). The clauses that express the experiences generally have three main components. The process is represented by the verbal group, the participant is indicated by a nominal phrase, and the circumstance is generally conveyed by an adjunct. According to Zhao and Zhang (2017), "the concepts of process, participant, and circumstantial element offer the frame of reference to compound the experience of what goes on outside and inside" (p. 34). The process is regarded as the clause's fundamental notion, which is communicated via time (Downing & Locke, 2006). Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) describe six process categories that are employed in the transitivity framework. Material processes, mental processes, relational processes, behavioral processes, verbal processes, and existential processes are all examples.

Material processes are doing processes. They represent the idea that one entity performs something that another entity may experience (Halliday, 1994). The actor and the goal are two fundamental participants in material processes. The actor performs the task described in the clause, whereas the goal is the entity to which the actor's activities are geared. Other material process participants include the initiator, scope, client, recipient, and attribute (Halliday, 1994).

A mental process is a method of sensing that involves the use of consciousness, inferences, and feelings. It is concerned with an individual's internal experiences. The Sensor and Phenomenon are the two primary participants in the mental process. The Sensor is not limited to humans; it can be anything,

living or inanimate, that can be viewed as fully cognizant. The Phenomenon, or entity being experienced, felt, conceived, or imagined by the sensor, is the other participant. However, one of the two participants (sensor or phenomenon) may not be directly or openly participating in a mental process (Thompson, 2000). The mental process is divided into four subgroups: emotional, cognition, perception and desideration (Anafo, 2017; Downing & Locke, 2006; Thompson, 2013).

The relational process is focused on the interaction that occurs between units. This link is established amongst two distinct entities, yet without implying that one influences the other in any manner (Halliday, 1994). The relational process is comprised of two participant roles: the carrier, which relates to the subject of the clause before the verb, and the attribute, which is a characterization of the verb or a statement on the subject that is normally an adjectival or nominal. The relational process includes states of being such as attribution and recognition. The attributive attributes a property to a unit, whereas the identifying immediately displays, discloses, or recognizes an entity (Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Zhao & Zhang, 2017).

Behavioral processes are types of action that are the outward manifestation of our inner ideas. According to Anafo (2017, p. 41), “the behavioural process is the borderline between mental and material processes”. Behavioral processes are physiological and psychological behavior processes such as respiration, imagining, smiling, seeing, hearing, and contemplating (Gerot & Wignell, 1994). Behavioral processes are often reflexive, according to Downing and Locke (2006). The behavior and range, also known as behavior, are two significant participants in behavioral processes. The behavior is the individual who evokes the action, whereas the range is the induced behavior.

The manifestation or disclosure of experiences in the mind through utterance is referred to as the verbal process. As a result, verbal processes depict the process of saying. The verbal process exists between the material and mental processes. It consists of four participants: the sayer, the receiver, the target, and the verbiage. The sayer might be either a person or an inanimate object with the ability to communicate meaning and information via vocal articulation. The receiver is the person to whom the message is directed. The entity targeted or directed at by the saying process is referred to as the target, while the verbiage corresponds to the substance of the clause or everything that is spoken in the clause. In some cases, the target and receiver are the same, while in others, they are not.

Existential processes reflect existing and occurring processes. It embeds an entity's existence and, in some cases, also specifies its position. It exists between the relational and material processes. The existential process has a distinct clausal structure that often begins with ‘there’ or the word ‘exist’ (Halliday, 1994). The Existent is the lone participant in the existential process. The existent is the thing or occurrence that is thought to exist. Any type of entity, such as an individual, substance, event, institution, or occurrence, can be the Existent. Besides the verb *exist*, additional verbs denoting this process include *flourish*, *emerge*, *happen*, and so on.

2.2 Transitivity Studies on Religious Texts

Awuku (2018) applied the transitivity framework to analyze the language of the *Sermon on the Mount*. The study analyzed language use in the text by exploring the process types and participants. In the *Sermon on the Mount*, the material process was the predominant process type while the goal-participants were the predominant participants. The discursal function of the text was mainly persuasive for which Jesus, the leader of Christianity exhibited His knowledge of the social issues for which His message tried to cause a behavioural change in His followers and disciples. The world view of the text was hinged on social issues including divorce, marriage, adultery and peaceful coexistence. The text also revolved around spiritual issues such as trust, giving and prayer.

Ngongo et al. (2022) applied the transitivity framework to study Mathew's Gospel, New Testament of Kupang Malay language. In the Gospel, the material process was the predominant process type, followed by mental, verbal, behavioral, relational and existential process types. With the exception of relational and existential process types, all other process types combined two or three verbs to express a single meaning. The participants for the material process included actor, goal, client and recipient. All participants, which had functions relating to speech roles, were realized by nominal groups which included personal pronouns. For circumstances, they were realized by location, time, cause, reason and manner.

Furthermore, Ningrum (2022) studied the language of Friday sermon delivered by Mouman Ali Khan. The analysis was done within the transitivity framework. The material process dominated the text. The preacher revealed his past, present and future experiences through the process of doing to make his experiences concrete and relatable to his audience. Mental process was the second dominant process type observed in the text. This process type characterized the speaker sharing of his internal mental experiences and thoughts about his world. Behavioral and existential processes were rarely used within the text.

Kurniani (2017) also explored religious language from the perspective of transitivity. The study undertook a functional analysis of the Friday sermon delivered by Mufti Ismail Ibn Musa Menk. The material process dominated the text, followed by behavioral and verbal process types. The existential process was the least observed process type in the text. With the use of the material process, the sermoner was able to invite his audience to adhere to instructions of Allah. Similar observations were made by Al-Ebadi (2012) who reported that material process dominated the Epistle of James, followed by mental process type. In his investigation, there were no behavioral and existential process types in the Epistle of James. The world view expressed through the process types was tolerance for difficult situations, seeking divine wisdom, necessity for obedience, forbearance and statement of facts. In the epistle, the dominant participant was actor and the least were sayer and verbiage. Most of the circumstance were distributed on time, manner, condition, quality, matter, accompaniment, result and place.

3. Method

3.1 Study Design

The study adopted a mixed method approach (qualitative and quantitative research designs). In the view of Creswell and Plano (2010), the mixed method approach is a “third way” methodological approach used in social science research to employ diverse methods by combining deductive and inductive thinking to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of social issues. Whereas the qualitative approach focuses on verbal and textual description, the quantitative approach explores statistical measurement. In the present study, the qualitative design was used through interpretive analysis. To answer the second research question, descriptive interpretation of the data required that some aspects of the qualitative research design be brought into the study. The design, therefore, helped in describing the emerging themes in respect of the worldview construed in the text. On the other hand, statistics on the occurrence of the process types, participants and their functions introduced into the study some elements of the quantitative research design. The first research question was addressed using frequency values, hence, the need for the quantitative design.

3.2 Data Source and Selection

Primary data for this study was *The Parable of the Sower* drawn from Modern English Version (MEV) (Mark 4:1-20) of the Holy Bible. This version of the Bible heralds a new day for Bibles and has the most modern literal translation produced in the King James tradition. Using the King James Version as the base manuscript, the MEV is a translation of the Textus Receptus and the Jacob ben Hayyim edition of the Masoretic Text. Linzey (2014, p. 129) argues that the MEV “is a translation based on the traditional original language texts of the Christian Scriptures” as opposed to modern critical texts which do not make it varied from the original text. This version of the Holy Bible was, therefore, viable and authentic to be sourced for this study.

The Parable of the Sower is one of the parables given by Jesus as recorded in Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-15 and also found in the extra-canonical Gospel of Thomas. In this parable, Jesus explains to his followers and the disciples the different responses to saving the Gospel. The parable teaches Christians the essence of the heart in receiving the Gospel. It elucidates how salvation is guaranteed by the choices made by Christians and their actions upon hearing the Gospel. Using agricultural metaphor, Jesus drives down the message of salvation to his spectators by employing practical illustrative images. The spiritual meaning of the story, as Jesus told it, could best be understood within the illustrative narrative, hence, Jesus’ use of agricultural metaphor. The audience of the parable mainly made their living through agriculture, thereby, situating the parable in such narrative context only ensured they (audience) found the discourse relatable. *The Parable of the Sower* is considered “the parable of parables” because it “really contains four parables in one with each emphasizing one basic truth” (Booth, 2005, p. 7). As one of the thirty-two (32) parables recorded in the Gospels, aside its popularity, this parable was chosen for the study because it is considered as a growth

parable which guides the spiritual advancement of Christians. A look at how language is explored in this parable gives a better understanding of the experiences construed and shared by Jesus with his followers and disciples.

3.3 Analysis Procedure

The study illustrated the worldview of the religious text, *The Parable of the Sower*, using the transitivity system within the ideational metafunction of language. The central elements of the theory, which are the process types and the participants, were explored in the text. The parable was extracted and the clauses of the text were parsed manually according to the process types, participant functions and circumstances. Within the SFG, clauses are central and pivotal to language communication (Thompson, 2014). Burton's (1982) three (3)-steps to transitivity analysis were used: (1) process isolation and determination of participant for each process, (2) determination of process type and identification of participant engaged in the process type; and (3) authentication of who/what is/seems to be affected by each process type. The process types and their corresponding participants were indicated after clauses had been numbered. The process types were coded as MAT, REL, MENT, VERB, BEH and EXT. The data on the process types was typed into the Corpus analysis toolkit software Antconc 3.4.4.0 to determine the frequency of occurrence of the process types.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Process Types in the Parable

After analyzing the text, there were seventy-four (74) clauses in the parable and seventy-seven (77) processes were identified. In the *Parable of the Sower*, seventy-seven verbal groups are distributed across five process types. Table 1 presents a summary of the distribution of the process types across all clauses in the data. All the process types, except existential process, were identified in the data.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Process Types

Process type	Frequency	Percentage
Material	42	54.5
Relational	14	18.2
Mental	11	14.3
Verbal	6	7.8
Behavioral	4	5.2
Total	77	100

The dominant process type in the text was the material process type, which occurred 42 times (54.5%). This agrees with studies undertaken by Kurniani (2017), Ningrum (2022) Ngongo et al. (2022) and Awuku (2018), who also applied transitivity framework to religious literature and concluded that,

material process dominates religious texts. The material process type construes a quantum of events happening within a time or in a place. The parable mainly illustrates the activity of the sower as a flow of events. This experience is embedded in the material process. The dominant use of the material process type renders the entire data one which is action-oriented. It gives the impression that the parable details the expected actions and behaviours of Christians to whom the story was directed. The material process type had three participants; actor, goal and recipient. The actor participant was the dominant participant in the data, occurring 24 times (27.3%). The goal participant also occurred 10 times (11.4%) while the recipient participant occurred 2 times (2.3%). Both participants were realized by nominal groups, nouns and pronouns. Some clauses from the text which contained the material processes were:

1. Again He_{actor} began_{material process} to teach_{material process} by the seaside_{location}.
2. A large crowd_{actor} was gathered_{material process} before Him_{location}.
3. Some seed_{actor} fell_{material process} beside the path_{location}, and the birds of the air_{actor} came_{material process} and devoured_{material process} it_{goal}.

Relational process type was the second dominant process type in the text. It occurred 14 times (18.2%). The process type primarily identifies and characterizes. Within the data, the relational process type assigns attribute and features to the individual participants found within the context of the parable. The sower, the seed and Christians are entities who through relational process are characterized. Carrier and attribute were the participants of the relational process type. The carrier participant occurred 13 times (14.8%) while attribute participant occurred 11 times (12.5%). Some clauses with relational process were:

4. These_{carrier} are_{intensive-relational process} those beside the path_{attribute}
5. Those who_{carrier} were_{circumstantial-relational process} around Him with the twelve_{location}
6. He who_{carrier} has_{possessive-relational process} ears_{attribute} to hear_{behavioral process}

The mental process type was the third dominant process type in the data. It occurred 11 times (14.3%) in the text. The mental process type construes our experiences taking place within our consciousness. The process encodes inner experiences of the entities within the context of the parable. It explains the mental activities of the entities expressed within the clauses. The mental process type had two participants; the senser and the phenomenon. The senser occurred 9 times (10.2%) while the phenomenon occurred 7 times (8.0%). Both participants were realized by nominal groups. Some clauses from the text with mental process are given:

7. those who_{senser} hear_{perceptive-mental process} the word_{phenomenon}
8. How then will you_{senser} understand_{cognitive-mental process} all the parables_{phenomenon}
9. And their sins_{senser} be forgiven_{emotive-mental process} them.

The fourth most used process type in the data was the verbal process type. It occurred 6 times (7.8%) in the data. This process type typically accounts for dialogues. In the data, not much of dialoguing was

observed, hence, the rare use of the verbal process type. The instances of this process type indicated the periods at which Jesus directed His speech to His audience and His disciples [the audience] also made interjections. Three participants were observed in the verbal process type. The sayer occurred 3 times (3.4%) while the verbiage occurred twice (2.2%). The receiver/target occurred 5 times (5.7%). Some clauses from the data with verbal process are given:

10. Then He_{sayer} said_{verbal process} to them_{target}
11. Everything_{verbiage} is said_{verbal process} in parables_{circumstance}
12. ...asked_{verbal process} Him_{receiver} about the parable_{verbiage}

The least observed process type in the data was the behavioral process type, which occurred 4 times (5.2%). This process type construes the psychological behavior of the entities identified in the world of the parable. These clauses encode the human behaviors of the participants within the clauses and seeks to instruct them towards a desired behavior. A clause with the behavioral process type is given:

13. He who_{carrier} has_{possessive-relational process} ears_{attribute} to hear_{behavioral process}, let him_{behavior} hear_{behavioral process}

The participant of the behavioral process, behavior, occurred twice (2.3%) across the data. Table 2 presents a summary of transitivity concordance of participants identified in the clauses within the text.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Participants for the Process Types

Participant	Frequency	Percentage
Actor	24	27.3
Goal	10	11.4
Carrier	13	14.8
Attribute	11	12.5
Recipient	2	2.3
Senser	9	10.2
Phenomenon	7	8.0
Sayer	3	3.4
Receiver/Target	5	5.7
Verbiage	2	2.3
Behaver	2	2.3
Total	88	100

4.2 Worldview of the Parable through the Transitivity System

Through the material process, the text is heavily action-oriented. The world of the text is one concerned with tangible actions, happenings, movements and doings of the participants. The clauses describe the doings of Jesus, His disciples and the Sower. The actions described in the text are encoded in verbs

such as *begin, gather, enter, sit, sow, teach, go, fall, come, devour, rise, scorch, wither, grow, choke, spring, increase, give, and turn*. These verbs provide clear instructions to the disciples who were the audience of the parable. Jesus uses the material process to instruct His audience by depicting an action-oriented world. The sower, who is the dominant actor in the material process, is described as moving and performing. Other participants in the material process, such as *seeds, birds, thorns, Satan* and *sun* are also described as moving. The following excerpts illustrate this observation:

14. A sower_{actor} went out_{material process} to sow_{material process}
15. some seed_{actor} fell_{material process} beside the path_{location}
16. and the birds of the air_{actor} came_{material process} / and devoured_{material process} it_{goal}

The sower's actions are extended to what the disciples and Christians must do to receive the word of God and bear fruits. Given the fact that Christianity is a lifestyle characterized by actions and happenings, the material process encodes the intentions and purpose of the parable which is to instruct. Jesus' audience were given clear instructions as to what to do and what not to do. The text details expected actions of Christians for their spiritual growth and salvation. The parable makes strong comparison between seed sowing and accepting the word of God. Through the various process types, the parable situates the life of the Christian and the various phases that one could find him/herself after receiving the word of God. Using several metaphors, images and symbolic representations, Jesus cautions His disciples and followers on the need to take the necessary precautions and bear fruits with the word. In religious literature, metaphors and other figurative languages conserve and convey messages. In the view of Wierzbicka (2001, p. 445) "...in Christianity and other world religions, some of the deepest and most important truths have been formulated, preserved, and transmitted through the centuries in metaphors". Using words such as *withers, sun, scorch, Satan, steal, fall away, and thorns*, the parable details impediments that Christians might encounter in their spiritual quest to bear fruits after receiving the word of God. These extracts illustrate this observation.

17. Satan_{actor} comes_{material process} immediately_{circumstance-manner} / and takes away_{material process} the word_{goal} / which is sown_{material process} in their hearts_{location}.
18. But the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things_{actor} entering in_{material process} / Choke_{material process} the word_{goal} / and it_{behavior} proves_{behavioral process} unfruitful_{circumstance-quality}

As an allegory, the worldview of the parable could be described as: the nature of Christians upon receiving the word and instructions towards bearing fruits. The nature of the Christian upon receiving the word is described as either being enthusiastic, materialistic, double-minded and stressed. These characterize the various situations of the Christian upon hearing the word of God. Through the various process types and participant roles, Jesus makes extensive comparisons between the life of the Christian upon hearing the word and the nature of growing seeds. Commitment, focus, steadfastness, and faithfulness also characterize the worldview of the parable instructing Christians towards bearing

fruits with the word. They are cautioned to exhibit these virtues to receive the generosity and mercies of God, and attaining salvation.

5. Conclusion

This paper has illustrated the role of language in preserving and formulating truths in religion. Using the transitivity framework of Halliday's SFG, linguistic analysis of the *Parable of the Sower* and the worldview of the parable through the transitivity system has been demonstrated in the paper. The paper has shown how the *Parable of the Sower* builds a sense of action and calls the Christian to demonstrate proper virtues towards salvation. The analysis revealed that the discursive construction and the worldview created in the parable hinges majorly on the material process types. As an action-oriented parable, a call to action for the Christian to attain salvation is illustrated in the text. Focusing on the underexplored context in the literature, this paper extends scholarship on functional linguistic analysis of religious text and particularly provides empirical evidence of linguistic analysis of biblical parables. To consolidate the evidence put forward, future researchers should use the textual and interpersonal metafunctions of language to analyze language in parables.

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