BORNEO JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

VOLUME 8 NOMOR 1 TAHUN 2026
ISSN: 2685-810X

IDEATIONAL MEANING IN MOTIVATIONAL SPEECH VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE : A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This research analyses the ideational meaning of a video on YouTube titled *Do You Have a Networking Mindset?* delivered by Klementina Sula. The objectives of the study were to identify how ideational meaning is realized through the transitivity system, and find out what process type dominantly used in the speech. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach based on Systemic Functional Linguistics proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen. Data were based on the transcript of the speech and examined within a document analysis framework concerning processes, participants, and contexts. The results revealed that there were all six process types: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral and existential processes. Material process (average voice over per utterance) was the most frequent type, reflecting how much content of motivational messages conveyed with concrete actions / experiences. "You" was also frequently used in mental and relational processes to express beliefs, aspirations, and ideas pertaining to networking. Thus, the study shows how motivational speech successfully constructs ideational meaning through experiential representations to provide persuasion and inspiration.

Keywords: Ideational Meaning, Motivational Speech, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Transitivity System, YouTube Speech

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, many people watch motivational videos on YouTube to get inspired, motivated, or to handle problems. YouTube has become a medium for sharing a lot of content, such as speeches; one of them is a motivational speech. In a motivational video, the speaker is not only delivering words of encouragement but also sharing their experience, struggles, failures, purpose, and action.

Motivational speech containing experience and ideas from the speaker. They chose certain words and sentences to describe an action, feeling, experience, or state. So, language

in a motivational speech video can be analyzed to determine how experiences and motivational messages are represented.

In systemic functional linguistics, language has a function to represent experience. That function is called ideational meaning. Ideational meaning itself can be analyzed through the transitivity system, process, participant, and circumstance. Therefore, this approach is useful for understanding how motivational speakers represent their experiences and messages through language (Hermawan & Rahyono, 2019). Systemic Functional Linguistics views language as a resource for making meaning in social contexts, while its grammatical system provides a framework for examining how experience is represented through clauses (Bloor & Bloor, 2013; Eggins, 2004; Thompson, 2014).

The first previous study, conducted by (Setiawati et al., 2022) , has several similarities with the present study. Both studies analyze spoken discourse delivered through an online video platform and use Systemic Functional Linguistics as the theoretical framework. In addition, both studies are concerned with the experiential representation of meaning in a speech. (Setiawati et al., 2022). analyzed Lydia Machova's TED Talk entitled *The Secrets of Learning a New Language* by focusing on circumstantial elements, which are also part of the transitivity system. However, their study is different from the present study in terms of the focus and object of analysis. Their research only examined the types and dominant use of circumstances in a speech about language learning, while the present study analyzes ideational meaning more comprehensively through processes, participants, and circumstances in motivational speech videos on YouTube.

The second previous study, conducted by (Sirait et al., 2026), is closely related to the present study because both analyze inspirational spoken discourse from YouTube through the transitivity system. Sirait et al. (2026) examined Sam Berns' TEDx Talk entitled *My Philosophy for a Happy Life*, in which the speaker shared his experience and positive life philosophy while living with progeria. Like the present study, their research discussed processes, participants, and circumstances in representing personal experiences and empowering messages. However, Sirait et al., (2026) combined Systemic Functional Linguistics with Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate the speaker's identity, ideology, resilience, and disability narrative. Meanwhile, the present study focuses specifically on ideational meaning in motivational speech videos through the analysis of processes, participants, and circumstances, without discussing ideology or identity construction in depth. Previous studies have also applied transitivity analysis to different types of discourse, including students' analytical exposition texts and political speeches. These studies demonstrate the applicability of the transitivity system to examining how experience and meaning are represented through language (Amalia & Emilia, 2025; Hardiyanti et al., 2023).

Overall, both previous studies share a similar concern with the present study because they examine spoken discourse by using Systemic Functional Linguistics, particularly the transitivity system. They show that language choices in a speech can reveal how speakers represent experiences, actions, conditions, and messages. However, each previous study has a

different focus. (Setiawati et al., 2022) only focused on circumstantial elements in a speech about language learning. Sirait et al., (2026) analyzed an inspirational TEDx Talk by combining SFL with Critical Discourse Analysis to examine identity and ideology. Therefore, the present study is different because it specifically investigates the realization of ideational meaning in motivational speech videos on YouTube through processes, participants, and circumstances.

This study aims to analyze the ideational meaning found in motivational speech videos on YouTube by identifying the types of processes, participants, and circumstances used by the speaker. Specifically, this study seeks to examine how motivational speakers represent their experiences, actions, thoughts, and feelings through their language choices. Furthermore, this study aims to identify the type of transitivity process that is most frequently used in delivering motivational messages. Based on these objectives, this study is guided by the following research questions: How do motivational speakers represent their experiences, actions, thoughts, and feelings through ideational meaning in selected motivational speech videos on YouTube; What type of transitivity process is most frequently used in selected motivational speech videos on YouTube?.

METHOD

1. Research Design

This research utilized a descriptive qualitative approach, specifically through document analysis, to explore ideational meaning in a motivational speech video available on YouTube. As stated by Creswell (2014), qualitative research prioritizes the interpretation and comprehension of meanings conveyed in textual data. Consequently, this methodology was deemed suitable since the analysis focused on linguistic phenomena rather than numerical information. The study employed Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity framework within Systemic Functional Linguistics to identify various process types, participants, and circumstances that illustrate ideational meaning in the speech. The classification of clauses was also informed by functional grammar descriptions that explain how process types, participant roles, and circumstantial elements contribute to the representation of experience (Butt et al., 2012; Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Martin et al., 2010). The object of this study was the motivational speech entitled *"Do You Have a Networking Mindset?"* delivered by Klementina Sula (TEDxUofM, 2026). The transcript of the speech was used as the primary source of data.

2. Data Collection

The data were collected through documentation technique. The primary data consisted of clauses taken from the transcript of the motivational speech obtained from YouTube subtitles and manually reviewed to ensure accuracy.

In this study, the researcher acted as the main instrument in collecting and analyzing the data. Supporting instruments included the speech video, transcript, coding sheets, and transitivity analysis tables.

Several procedures were conducted in collecting the data. First, the researcher watched the video repeatedly to understand the content comprehensively. Second, the transcript was downloaded and carefully read. Third, the transcript was divided into clauses. Finally, clauses containing ideational meaning were identified and organized into a classification table.

Table 1. Transitivity Analysis Instrument

No	Clause	Type process	Participant	Circumstance
1	*One of my students asked to meet for office hours*	Verbal Process	Sayer: One of my students	Circumstance: for office hours
2	*We walked back to one of the small conference rooms*	Material Process	Actor: We	Circumstance of Place: back to one of the small conference rooms
3	*She trusted me with all of you*	Mental Process	Senser: She ; Phenomenon: me	Circumstance: with all of you

Table 1 was used as the research instrument to classify clauses based on transitivity elements, namely process, participant, and circumstance, following Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity framework.

3. Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed descriptively using Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity theory. The analysis focused on identifying three elements of transitivity: process, participant, and circumstance. The clauses were classified into six process types, namely material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential processes.

Table 2. Types of Process in Transitivity System

Process Type	Meaning	Example
Material Process	Process of doing / action	*She builds relationships*
Mental Process	Process of sensing / thinking / feeling	*I believe the idea*
Relational Process	Process of being / identifying	*Networking is important*
Verbal Process	Process of saying	*She said the truth*
Behavioral Process	Physiological or psychological behavior	*They laughed loudly*
Existential Process	Process of existence	*There is an opportunity*

The analysis procedures involved reading the transcript repeatedly, identifying process types in each clause, determining participant and circumstance elements, classifying the data into transitivity categories, and interpreting the ideational meaning represented in the speech.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

The analysis of the complete transcript of Klementina Sula's motivational speech *"Do You Have a Networking Mindset?"* identified a total of 214 clauses. All 214 clauses were analyzed using Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity framework and classified into six process types. The analysis further identified 468 participant occurrences and 126 circumstance occurrences distributed throughout the speech. Material processes occurred 88 times (41.1%), mental processes occurred 39 times (18.2%), relational processes occurred 45 times (21.0%), verbal processes occurred 23 times (10.7%), behavioral processes occurred 9 times (4.2%), and existential processes occurred 10 times (4.7%). These findings indicated that material process was the most dominant process type, whereas behavioral process was the least frequent category.

Table 3. Overall Distribution of Process Types

Process Type	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Material Process	88	41.1
Mental Process	39	18.2
Relational Process	45	21.0
Verbal Process	23	10.7
Behavioral Process	9	4.2
Existential Process	10	4.7
Total	**214**	**100**

Material processes represented actions, events, and concrete experiences. Additionally, mental processes represented cognition, perception, and affect. Relational processes expressed identification, attribution, and definition. Verbal processes realized acts of saying and communicating. Behavioral processes represented physiological and social behavior, whereas existential processes encoded existence and occurrence.

The transitivity analysis demonstrated that material process was the most dominant category, occurring 88 times and accounting for 41.1% of all clauses. Relational process ranked second with 45 occurrences (21.0%), followed by mental process with 39 occurrences (18.2%). Verbal process appeared 23 times (10.7%), existential process occurred 10 times (4.7%), and behavioral process was the least frequent process type with 9 occurrences (4.2%).

The predominance of material processes suggested that the speaker mainly represented networking through actions, experiences, achievements, and practical engagement with others. The relatively high occurrence of relational and mental processes indicated that networking was also constructed as a conceptual belief system and a cognitive orientation.

Meanwhile, verbal processes reflected the importance of communication in relationship building.

Material Process Analysis

Material process was the most dominant process type, occurring 88 times (41.1%) and ranking first among all categories. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), material processes construe experiences of doing and happening. In the speech, these processes were used extensively to narrate personal experiences and illustrate how networking functions through action.

Representative examples included "**I applied**," "**We met on the third floor of Weiser Hall**," "**I did a ton of research**," "**I interned at the U.S. Embassy in Kiev**," "**We hired recent grads**," "**I built the International Giving and Engagement Program**," and "**People give opportunities to those they know**." In these clauses, the Actor was typically realized by the first-person participant *I*, while the Goal consisted of opportunities, programs, internships, or professional achievements.

The high frequency of material processes indicated that the speaker framed networking as an active practice rather than a passive condition. Networking was represented as a sequence of purposeful actions, including meeting people, building relationships, conducting research, pursuing internships, and creating opportunities. Consequently, experiential meaning was largely constructed through narratives of action and accomplishment.

Mental Process Analysis

Mental processes occurred 39 times (18.2%), making it the third most frequent process type. Mental processes encoded cognition, perception, affection, and desire. The speech contained numerous examples illustrating what the speaker thought, believed, remembered, wanted, and learned.

Examples included "**I believe that Sam gave me the opportunity**," "**I remember asking**," "**I knew a lot about the organizers**," "**I wanted to become an immigration attorney**," "**I think a lot about words**," and "**I really believe it will happen**."

These clauses showed that networking was not presented solely as action but also as a mindset grounded in personal beliefs and reflections. The Senser was frequently realized by the speaker (*I*), while the Phenomenon included opportunities, goals, networking concepts, and future aspirations. The substantial presence of mental processes demonstrates that motivational discourse seeks to transform the audience's thinking by encouraging new perspectives and beliefs about success and relationships.

Relational Process Analysis

Relational process occurred 45 times (21.0%), ranking second among all process types. Relational clauses were primarily used to define networking, establish identities, and construct conceptual meanings.

Examples included "**Networking is about who knows you**," "**Networking is the process of building, nurturing, and activating relationships**," "**A process is repeatable**," "**It is not a transaction**," "**The networking mindset is the belief**," and "**Visibility matters**."

Through these relational clauses, the speaker systematically defined the central concepts of the speech. Networking was repeatedly identified and characterized through relational structures. These clauses enabled the speaker to move beyond personal anecdotes and formulate general principles applicable to the audience. Consequently, relational processes played a significant role in constructing the theoretical framework of networking.

Verbal Process Analysis

Verbal process appeared 23 times (10.7%), ranking fourth. Verbal processes represented acts of saying, asking, explaining, telling, and responding. Representative examples included "**One of my students asked to meet**," "**She said to me**," "**I told him**," "**They explained something**," "**Peggy said**," "**The dean said**," and "**I want to tell you exactly how it will happen**."

The occurrence of verbal processes reflected the communicative nature of networking. The speech consistently portrayed opportunities as emerging through conversations and interpersonal communication. Many turning points in the speaker's career trajectory originated from spoken interactions. Therefore, verbal processes reinforced the argument that networking develops through dialogue and meaningful exchanges.

Behavioral Process Analysis

Behavioral processes occurred 9 times (4.2%), making it the least frequent category. Behavioral processes represent physiological and psychological behavior located between material and mental processes. Examples included "**I laughed out loud**," "**We chit-chatted a little bit**," "**People engage with you**," and "**We were eating pizza and drinking Singaporean sling**." Although relatively limited in frequency, behavioral processes contributed to the interpersonal and human dimensions of the speech. These clauses depicted social interaction and emotional expression, thereby making the narrative more relatable and authentic.

Existential Process Analysis

Existential processes occurred 10 times (4.7%), ranking fifth among all process types. Existential clauses were used to indicate the existence of opportunities, conditions, or general truths. Examples included "**There is an equal and opposite reaction**," "**There is anything I can do for you**," and "**Yes, there is**."

These clauses supported the motivational purpose of the speech by presenting opportunities and possibilities as existing realities. Existential constructions allowed the speaker to generalize her experiences and frame networking principles as broadly applicable phenomena.

Participant Analysis

The analysis identified 468 participant occurrences. The most dominant participant was the first-person pronoun **"I"**, functioning primarily as Actor, Senser, Sayer, and Carrier. The dominance of this participant reflected the autobiographical nature of the speech.

The extensive use of "I" enabled the speaker to establish credibility through personal experience. Other recurring participants included *people*, *students*, *Sam*, *Peggy Burns*, *networking*, *opportunities*, and *relationships*. These participants collectively formed a network of social actors through which experiential meaning was constructed. The prominence of human participants emphasized that networking is fundamentally a people-centered process.

Circumstance Analysis

The analysis identified 126 circumstance occurrences. The most frequent circumstance types were Location (place and time), followed by Manner and Cause/Purpose. Examples of location circumstances included "**at the University of Michigan**," "**in Geneva, Switzerland**," "**at the U.S. Embassy in Kiev**," and "**in front of all of you here tonight**." Temporal circumstances such as "**last fall**," "**a few weeks later**," and "**this year**" were also common. Purpose circumstances appeared in clauses such as "**to access opportunity**," "**to reach a shared goal or purpose**," and "**to prepare for life after graduation**." These circumstances helped contextualize actions and clarified the goals underlying networking behavior. As a result, circumstances enriched ideational meaning by situating actions within specific social, temporal, and motivational contexts.

DISCUSSION

From the perspective of Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity theory, the distribution of process types revealed how experiential meaning was organized in the speech. The dominance of material processes (88 occurrences; 41.1%) indicated that the speaker primarily construed networking as a practice of action and engagement rather than a purely abstract concept. Material clauses represented the speaker's educational experiences, professional development, internships, mentoring relationships, and career achievements. Through these processes, networking emerged as something people actively do rather than something they merely possess.

The prevalence of material processes aligns closely with the communicative purpose of motivational discourse. Motivational speakers typically encourage audiences to act, pursue opportunities, and transform their circumstances. Consequently, experiential meanings tend to be encoded through processes of doing and happening. The frequent use of material clauses allowed the speaker to provide concrete evidence supporting her central claim that networking creates opportunities through sustained action.

The second most frequent category was relational process (45 occurrences; 21.0%). Relational clauses played a crucial role in constructing definitions and conceptual understandings. The repeated statements "Networking is about who knows you" and "Networking is the process of building, nurturing, and activating relationships" established the ideological foundation of the speech. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) argue that

relational processes are central to classification and identification. In this speech, they functioned to redefine conventional assumptions about networking and establish a new conceptual framework for understanding professional relationships.

Mental processes (39 occurrences; 18.2%) further enriched ideational meaning by representing cognition, belief, aspiration, and reflection. The speaker repeatedly expressed what she believed, remembered, learned, and desired. These processes were significant because motivational discourse aims not only to change behavior but also to reshape beliefs. The networking mindset was therefore represented linguistically through mental processes that encoded personal conviction and future-oriented thinking.

The occurrence of verbal processes (23 occurrences; 10.7%) highlighted the communicative dimension of networking. Opportunities emerged through conversations with students, colleagues, donors, and mentors. From an SFL perspective, verbal processes connected individual experiences with broader social interaction. The findings suggest that communication acts as a mechanism through which relationships are initiated, maintained, and activated.

Behavioral processes (9 occurrences; 4.2%) and existential processes (10 occurrences; 4.7%) occurred less frequently but performed important supporting functions. Behavioral clauses humanized the narrative by depicting laughter, interaction, and engagement. Existential clauses introduced generalized truths and possibilities, thereby reinforcing the motivational orientation of the speech.

The findings correspond with previous transitivity studies on public and motivational discourse. Similar to Setiawati et al. (2022), material processes emerged as the dominant category, indicating a strong emphasis on action and achievement. The present findings also support Dinda et al. (2022), who found that motivational texts frequently employ material and mental processes to combine practical action with psychological encouragement. Likewise, Ali and Munir (2022) reported that relational processes are often used to construct ideological meanings and define key concepts, a pattern clearly evident in the repeated definitions of networking in this speech. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with Sirait et al. (2026), who observed that motivational speakers commonly integrate material, mental, and verbal processes to create persuasive narratives grounded in personal experience.

The overall distribution of process types demonstrates how ideational meaning was constructed through the interaction of experience, cognition, and communication. Material processes represented lived experiences and career trajectories. Mental processes represented beliefs and aspirations. Relational processes define networking and its associated concepts. Verbal processes depicted communication as the vehicle of opportunity. Behavioral and existential processes supplemented these meanings by adding human engagement and generalized truths.

Participant patterns also contributed significantly to meaning construction. The dominance of the participant "I" reflected the autobiographical character of the speech and enhanced speaker credibility. Through repeated references to personal experience, the speaker positioned herself as both evidence and example of successful networking practices. Other participants, including students, donors, mentors, and colleagues, emphasized the social nature of opportunity creation.

Circumstance patterns reinforced this meaning structure. Frequent location and time circumstances grounded experiences in authentic contexts, while purpose circumstances highlighted the goal-oriented nature of networking activities. These patterns revealed that networking was consistently framed as a purposeful process occurring within specific social environments and directed toward meaningful outcomes.

In synthesis, the transitivity system demonstrates how the speech constructs networking as an actionable, relational, and belief-driven practice. The predominance of material processes (88 occurrences, 41.1%), supported by relational (45 occurrences, 21.0%) and mental processes (39 occurrences, 18.2%), shows that the speaker combines action, conceptual understanding, and personal conviction to persuade the audience. Through participant choices centered on human actors and circumstance patterns emphasizing context and purpose, the speech represents opportunity as emerging from trusted relationships. Consequently, the transitivity system contributes substantially to the persuasive and inspirational function of motivational discourse by transforming personal experience into a broadly applicable model of success grounded in networking relationships.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the ideational meaning realized in Klementina Sula's motivational speech "Do You Have a Networking Mindset?" through the transitivity system of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The analysis of the complete transcript identified 214 clauses, which were classified into six process types: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential processes. The findings revealed that material process was the most dominant process type, occurring 88 times (41.1%), followed by relational process with 45 occurrences (21.0%), mental process with 39 occurrences (18.2%), verbal process with 23 occurrences (10.7%), existential process with 10 occurrences (4.7%), and behavioral process with 9 occurrences (4.2%).

The predominance of material processes indicates that the speaker primarily represented experience through actions, achievements, and concrete events. Networking was portrayed as an active and purposeful process involving meeting people, building relationships, creating opportunities, and pursuing professional goals. Relational processes played a significant role in defining and conceptualizing networking, particularly through statements that framed networking as a process of building, nurturing, and activating relationships. Mental processes reflected the speaker's beliefs, aspirations, reflections, and personal convictions, while verbal processes highlighted the importance of communication and dialogue in establishing meaningful connections. Behavioral and existential processes,

although less frequent, supported the motivational message by representing social interaction and emphasizing the existence of opportunities and possibilities.

The participant analysis demonstrated that the first-person participant I was the most dominant participant, reflecting the autobiographical nature of the speech and strengthening the speaker's credibility through personal experience. In addition, participants such as people ,students, opportunities, and relationships emphasized the social dimension of networking. The circumstance analysis showed that location, time, and purpose circumstances occurred most frequently, indicating that networking experiences were consistently situated within specific contexts and directed toward clear goals.

Overall, the findings suggest that the ideational meaning of the speech was constructed through a combination of action-oriented experiences, conceptual definitions, personal beliefs, and interpersonal communication. The transitivity system enabled the speaker to present networking not merely as a professional skill but as a mindset grounded in relationships, trust, and mutual support. Therefore, the study concludes that the strategic use of transitivity resources contributes significantly to the persuasive and inspirational power of motivational speeches by transforming personal experiences into meaningful lessons that encourage audiences to develop and apply a networking mindset in achieving their goals.

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