

AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSITIVITY CHOICES IN HASHMI'S WHEN THE MOON IS LOW: A CORPUS BASED STUDY

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Abstract

The present study concerns on exploring how experiential meanings have been constructed through specific linguistic choices in Nadia Hashmi's novel *When the Moon Is Low*. The main theoretical framework used for the clause analysis is transitivity model of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) through which the experiential meanings in the novel under study have been studied. The data comprises the novel, '*When the Moon Is Low*' by Nadia Hashmi. Furthermore, the UAM corpus tool developed by O'Donnell (2009) has been used for the data analysis. The main focus of the research is to explore the transitivity patterns in the novel and explain the experiential meanings through transitivity analysis. Examining the language of a literary text can lead to a fuller understanding of the text and thus appreciation of the writer's artistic achievement (Leech & Short, 2007). Accordingly, this study considers the relationship between linguistic structures and socially constructed meaning in a literary text. The results of the study reveal that there are total 77235 grammatical units. The results depict the highest frequency of participants is 23618 (30.57%). The processes are 21343 (27.63%), circumstances 13043 (16.88%) and configuration 19232 (24.89%). Among process types, material process has the highest frequency 11219 (63.58%). It shows that the author has portrayed the events of the novels by elaborating what is happening in the material world and what the characters are doing. By analysing *When the Moon is Low* through transitivity framework, process types in selected texts and their function has been found. Transitivity choices impart a significant role in the transmission of implicit meanings.

Keywords: *Systemic Functional Linguistics, Transitivity, When the Moon is Low, Experiential meanings, UAM corpus tool*

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of present research is the analysis of transitivity patterns in the novel. The study has been carried out to find the patterns of linguistic choices in Hashmi's work and also to describe that how experiential meanings in the text of the novel can be revealed through transitivity analysis. The current study identifies and interprets the experiential meanings in the novel. The research focuses on analysing the ideational meta-function in the novel. The object of the study is the novel *When the Moon is Low* written by *Nadia Hashmi*. The theoretical framework used for the analysis of the data is transitivity analysis. The objectives of this research are: i) to identify patterns of transitivity employed in the text of novel and ii) to find out the experiential meanings in the novel.

Background of 'When the Moon is Low'

The novel has been written against the backdrop of Afghanistan. Nadia Hashmi illustrated the story of a young courageous girl 'Fereiba' who had a troubled childhood because her mother died in childbirth and she spent her childhood in the shadow of her stepmother. Her troubles and miseries ended when she got married to Mahmood, a civil engineer. She was serving as a schoolteacher until the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979. Later, the Taliban took over the country and miseries started to befall on her family. Her husband was executed by fundamentalists. Fereiba decided to leave the country along with her three children and reach England where she would join her sister. On her way to England with forged papers, she faced many obstacles and lost her eldest son 'Saleem' in Greece. However, Fereiba decided to continue her journey with a heavy heart. While on the other side, Saleem continued struggling to reunite with his separated family. Fereiba made it to England while Saleem crossed the treacherous borders on his own, hoping to reunite with his mother soon. The novel presents the picture of war trodden Afghanistan and the misfortunes which refugees face.

Theoretical Framework

As language is a systematic resource for expressing meaning in context, SFG is primarily interested in language use. Language, according to Halliday (1994), is a social semiotic resource that speakers use to convey their intended meaning. The occurrence of language is always related to the background of persons, events and action and from which the meanings of the things are derived (Halliday, 1978). SFG put focus on the context but the meaning cannot be comprehended solely

with the help of context rather it should be coalesced with the sentence at the clause level which is the most significant unit in functional grammar. The function of language contains three dimensions in SFG: i) how it works, ii) how it is organized, and iii) what type of social functions are reflected in language. To encompass all of these characteristics, Halliday (1985) created the term 'metafunction.' It is used to connect the concepts of 'system' and 'function,' which are the foundations of SFG theory. The three types of metafunctions are: ideational, interpersonal, and textual.

The term metafunctions was used by Shore (1992) to describe these meanings because they are the "result of a number of very wide and abstract uses that language has evolved to serve." These metafunctions help us understand the nature of language and why it is the way it is.

The theoretical concept which is being used in this research is Ideational metafunction. It is the role of language to encipher our contact with the world and its meaning, as well as to describe events and conditions that are occurring. It's the 'content function of language'. (Butt et al., 2000; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Halliday, 2007). Ideational metafunction focuses on the interpretation of clause as representation, and through ideational metafunction the narrator or writer encapsulates in language his experience of different happenings in the real world; and it takes into account the internal world experiences which includes the experience of his own consciousness, his cognition, conception and response, as well as the comprehension and speaking of linguistic acts. (Halliday, 1971).

There are two further types of Ideational metafunction, i) experiential and, ii) logical. The most essential SFL concept used in this thesis is experiential ideational metafunction. It is recognized through transitivity. This metafunction sees language as a depiction of the narrator's or writer's understanding of the real and internal worlds. A logical ideational metafunction, on the other hand, refers to the logical relationships that exist between structural elements such as coordination, subordination, modification, and apposition (Halliday, 1971).

Traditional grammar regarded verbs as transitive or intransitive depending on whether or not they contained an object, but in SFG, transitivity is a fundamental unit of the experiential function of the phrase that concerns with the transmission of objectives, representational processes, or experiences (Halliday, 1985). A physical process such as kicking is labelled distinctively than a mental process such as wishing,' according to transitivity. (Thompson, 1996). SFG's transitivity system is similar to the usual concept of transitive and intransitive verbs, but it looks at clauses rather than just a verb and its object. It takes into account the subject's role in a clause, which is not regarded in the traditional sense.

As a result, this can be said to be the most thorough version of the standard transitive and intransitive idea. SFG transitivity considers the entire clause, analyzing the object, verb, subject and adjuncts from a functional standpoint. All of these elements are labelled in the functional perspective according to the meanings they express in the clause. This approach is a great analytical tool for the examination of any text because of its labelling and functional views. The transitivity system is a linguistic depiction of the environment surrounding us and within us. This system construes our inner and outward experiences, relationships between experiences, concepts, things, identification and evaluation, and possessions and beings in language. 'In the main clauses, thematic, interpersonal, and transitivity analyses are carried out' (Ignatieva, 2008, p. 422).

The examination of data from Hashmi's novel focuses on the processes that "bear primary responsibility for depicting the events and settings to which the narrative relates" (Fowler & Kress, 1979, p. 198). The following lines go into detail about each process in the transitivity system. The material process is concerned with processes that, in most cases, include concrete, observable activities. They're the verbs for doings, activities, and occurrences. The participants involved in material processes are actor, goal, range and beneficiary. This is the process of happening and doing. Inert sensing is construed using mental processes. Perception, cognition, and affection are all conscious activities (Martin et al, 1997). Mental process verbs are divided into three categories by Halliday (1985): i) cognitive verbs of considering, knowing, and comprehending ii) reaction or attachment verbs of liking, fearing iii) perception verbs of seeing, hearing, and feeling 'Senser and Phenomenon' are two participants in this process.

The relational process encapsulates one's state of being. It is divided into three subtypes: i) Intensive; ii) Circumstantial and iii) Possessive – the relationship between two entities is of ownership; (BOER, 1988). Prepositional or adverb phrases realise the attributive circumstantial relational processes, which are not reversible. The verbs to have, belong, and own are used in the possessive relational clauses to express ownership between participants. Physiological and psychological (human) behaviour, as well as mental and verbal behaviour, are construed by behavioural clauses (Thompson, 1996). These processes do not require an act or anything to impact, yet they are in some ways about action as perceived by a conscious individual i.e., respire, sneeze, imagine. Usually, they only have one (obligatory) participant, the behavior.

The verbal process is a 'saying or uttering' process, also including its analogues for instance inquiry, interrogation, order, assert, etc., as well as semiotic processes which 'cover any other kind of figurative exchange of meaning' (Halliday, 1994, p.129). The Sayer, Target, Verbiage and Receiver, are

the four participants involved with this process. Existential process demonstrates that something exists or occurs through asserting that 'something was/is,'. The existential clauses can be easily recognized since their structure includes the word there. When referring to a location, the word 'there' has no pictorial meaning.

Previous Studies

On the horizon of literature and linguistic disciplines, SFL has arisen in the form of an analytical and theoretical framework. Various researchers from all around the world have used transitivity to analyze and evaluate a variety of fictional and non-fictional writing for the purpose of uncovering the interpretations, ideas, and philosophies. The relation between SFL theory and transitivity and corpus-based technique is novel and empirical. A quick review of several linguists who've employed transitivity to elucidate the usage of language in different genres of writing is presented below.

Halliday (1971) is regarded as the forerunner of transitivity analysis. In transitivity, his work on *The Inheritors*, a novel by British author William Golding, is formative. Halliday paved the way for future linguists to help them analyse literary texts in order to discover the link betwixt structure and use as well as grammar and meaning. Halliday observed another important point according to which the selection of processes and an underlying meaning provide eminence and rationale to subject matter chosen by Golding

Hubbard (1999) is another notable figure who employed the transitivity analysis. She demonstrates the manner in which a transitivity analysis exposes gender-specific stereotypes within famous (Mills Boon) romantic fiction and abets to explain the notions that the male characters are tough guys or super heroes in these novels, while the women are largely sufferers of their situations, along with their feelings and sentiments.

To uncover the hidden ideology, AL-Rifai (2010) examined lexico-grammatical elements in the text of a British poet, Wilfred Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum EST.' The author's negative choice of lexis and material processes pertaining to war deeds, death, disintegration, torment, and pain demonstrate the futility of war and its negative implications for humans. Through distinct transitivity patterns and lexis, he communicated his experiences with the readers.

Rashid (2016) also did a study named "Transitivity Analysis of Hiroko's Character in *Burnt Shadows*". This research investigates application of transitivity being an essence of grammatical analysis method intended for investigating Hiroko Tanaka's development as well as remaining personas' development within Kamila Shamsie's novel *Burnt Shadows*. The data reveal the most common process categories used to define characters, as well as the most common

participation roles intended for characters within connotation. The research indicated Hiroko as a focal point in the plot of novel moreover regarded as the novel's protagonist. She has 65 percent of the roles, and the verbal process is the most important

A few advertisements in some Nigerian publications were the subject of analysis by Ayoola (2013). The results suggest that the lexical choices and grammatical structures which depict the social, political as well as economic environment in these political advertisements surreptitiously reveal the speakers' attitude and viewpoint.

Haroon & Arslan (2021) conducted the research which was based on a thorough examination of Pakistani poet Imdad Hussein's poem "The Old Building." This paper presented a comprehensive transitivity study of ideational metafunction. The UAM tool was utilised to conduct the transitivity analysis. Through ideational metafunction, this article analysed the relationship between language forms and their meaning in a literary poem.

A study by Mahmood & Hashmi (2020) aimed at utilizing the transitivity device to illustrate Nilopher's character in the novel "The Stone Woman". Corpus of the novel was tagged with the "Stanford Log-linear Parts of Speech (POS) tagger", further a verb list was obtained. The processes 'material', 'mental', 'behavioral', 'verbal', 'relational', and 'existential' have been assigned to each verb. Following that, concordance was used to analyze each verb in its own clause. "Nilopher" is characterized being a strong-willed individual, according to the clause structure analysis of each phase. Author's syntactic choices assist us to deduce Nilopher's fickle and lusty temperament.

Ammara et al. (2019) attempted to investigate transitivity in Virginia Woolf's novel "To the Lighthouse" (1927) as a way of sentence analysis in the ideational meta-function of language. The study's major goal is to examine the experiential meanings contained in the novel's language and to investigate the writer's style of fiction narrative text. The study employs the AntConc corpus tool to conduct corpus-based analysis. A mixed-methods strategy was used in the study. in relation to the context. Under each sort of process, the words were manually classified. Through the software, the frequencies of each process were recognized and noted, along with the rank number. The finding demonstrates the novel's textual dominance of relational processes. With 49.6% of the text, the most common kind is "relational process". Furthermore, the frequently common processes discovered are relational process, which ranks first with 17.1 percent of the total. Material processes received 14.5 percent, verbal processes 8.6 percent, behavioural processes 5.7 percent, and existential processes 4.1 percent.

To sum up, the prior studies concentrated on other discourses and genres. And there is still no study regarding exploration of Hashmi's work. The present study is an attempt to bridge the gap between previous studies by employing the framework of transitivity system on the corpus of a fictional work. The current research focuses on the revelation of experiential meanings in ten excerpts selected from the novel.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed-method approach has been applied for analysing the data which includes qualitative and quantitative paradigms. The quantitative analysis generates percentages, frequencies and other numerically informative results. While qualitative analysis explains these differences in the result and gives an in-depth insight into the phenomena. The current study falls into the domain of mixed-method research because it determines the difference of frequency of transitivity process types in different parts of the text and then the researcher analyses word patterns of the author and explain them systematically.

Corpus Collection

The corpus of this study is composed of the novel *When the Moon Is Low* by Nadia Hashmi. The present study focuses on clause analysis through the implication of transitivity. All the clauses in the text of the novel are population. For the analysis of experiential meanings in the text, the technique of purposive sampling has been chosen and the sections of the novel has been selected from different chapters.

Table 1: Summary of text selection extracted from *When the Moon Is Low*

No	Text/Excerpt	Chapter Number	Page number
1	Text A	Chapter-1	07
2	Text B	Chapter-3	28
3	Text C	Chapter-12	89
4	Text D	Chapter-12	92
5	Text E	Chapter-15	112
6	Text F	Chapter-16	116

7	Text G	Chapter-32	224
8	Text H	Chapter-35	248
9	Text I	Chapter-45	318
10	Text J	Chapter-56	380

Research Instrument

The research instrument which has been used in this study is UAM Corpus Tool version 3.3v (henceforth UAM CT). The UAM Corpus Tool aims to annotate text corpora. The whole text can be annotated automatically after incorporating into the research instrument UAM Corpus tool for exploring the transitivity pattern. Frequencies and percentages of different types of processes has been generated with this tool.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The model of Systemic Functional Linguistics has been applied for the study of transitivity system in *When the Moon is Low*. Transitivity conveys experiential meanings by encoding processes, participants and circumstances. This study aims at exploring the transitivity system employed by *Hashmi* in the text of the novel. Furthermore, it also focuses on revealing the experiential meanings in the novel through the analysis of process types. After collecting the data, the researcher analysed it. A corpus-based analysis of the text was conducted through UAM CT.

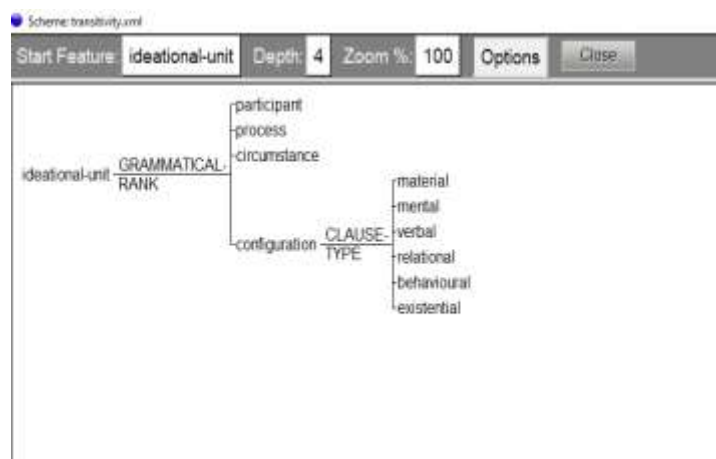


Fig. 1: Coding Scheme SFL Transitivity

Transitivity System Employed by the Author

The frequencies and percentages of transitivity components has been displayed and then the interpretation of the quantitative has been presented to show that how the author has employed transitivity in constructing novel. The frequencies and percentages are obtained through UAM CT. The statistics of transitivity components and process-types are presented in the table below to unveil the transitivity system in the novel under study.

Table 2: *Frequency distribution and percentages of Transitivity Components in the novel*

Feature	N	Percentage
Grammatical		
Rank	77235	
Participant	23618	30.57%
Process	21343	27.63%
Circumstance	13043	16.88%
Configuration	19231	24.89%
Clause Type	17645	
Material	11219	63.58%
Mental	2391	13.55%
Verbal	981	5.55%
Relational	2696	15.27%
Behavioural	143	0.81%
Existential	215	1.21%

The researcher interpretes the results and unveil how the author has employed transitivity system in constructing the novel. The interpretation of these findings gives an insight into the transitivity choices which the author has employed in the novel. The corpus-based analysis conducted through UAM CT presents the frequencies and percentages of transitivity elements.

The statistics of findings in Tab 2 shows that there is total 77235 grammatical units (N is the total number). The results show the highest frequency of participants is 23618 (30.57%). The processes are 21343 (27.63%), circumstances 13043 (16.88%) and configuration 19232 (24.89%).

Transitivity Analysis to Reveal the Experiential Meanings In the Text

Transitivity analysis explores the language patterns which the author has used to construe the experiences of the world around him. For the purpose of understanding the experiential meanings through transitivity analysis, selected excerpts from the text of the novel have been annotated and interpreted. The results obtained from the analysis of each selected text have been discussed one by one.

Text A has 6 sentences while the number of simple clauses in the excerpt is 12. This excerpt has been taken from the opening chapter of the story. It starts with first person narration. The data analysis has found total 16 processes. Out of these 16 processes, the material processes are 12 and relation processes are 3. Text A contains only one mental process. All other process types are not present in Text A. The dominance of material processes in the text indicates the events and activities in the life of characters. The experiential metafunction is concerned with the function of language as means of depiction of author's experience of different happenings in the real world.

Text B has been taken from chapter 3. The excerpt is significant because it narrates the event of an important day in the life of the leading character. It gives the description of the day she entered into the school for the first time. She was sixteen-year-old girl in first grade. The excerpt has total 7 sentences and 11 simple clauses. The transitivity analysis of the excerpt reveals that there are 18 processes. The number of material processes in the text is highest. Material processes found in Text B are 7 and relational processes are 5. While there are 3 mental processes and 3 behavioural processes in the selected text. Experiential meanings in the text have been realized through the transitivity analysis. The frequency of mental processes is less than material processes and so, the reader can make assumptions about the characters on the basis of their actions rather than on their thought process.

Text C has been extracted from chapter 12. It portrays the life changing events in the life of Fereiba. She delineates the cheerful as well as miserable changes taking place at the same time in her life when she got married. She gives an account of her married life and professional life. Text C is composed of 6 sentences and 8 simple clauses. The data of analysis exhibits total 14 processes. The extract contains 10 material processes, 4 relational processes and 1 behavioural process. The frequent use of material processes in this extract indicates the positive and negative things happening around her. There is no verbal, mental or existential process in the extract.

Text D is significant because it reports major events in the narrative. The Taliban took over the country and issued their own rules and laws. They ordered everyone to follow their law and those who refused or disobeyed were severely punished.. This excerpt is important because it represent the condition of war trodden Afghanistan where the people were afraid to leave their houses. Text D comprises 8 sentences and 11 simple clauses. Transitivity analysis of the undertaken text unveils the experiential meanings. Transitivity is an effective tool for textual analysis and comprehending the meanings which language construes. According to the findings in table 6 there are total 16 processes out of which material processes are 11, relational 2, verbal 1 and mental 2. The material processes dominate the Text D and provides the description of events taking place in the outer world. It mostly highlights the actions taken by the Taliban.

Text E has been extracted from chapter 15. This excerpt has a great significance because it portrays a climacteric incident in the life of main character. In this part of the novel, Fereiba, the narrator received the sad news of her husband's execution by the extremists. This excerpt has 7 sentences while the number of simple clauses is 14. The findings illustrate total 15 processes. Mental processes occupy the excerpt the text. The text contains 5 mental processes, 1 relational, 3 verbal, 2 material and 4 behavioural processes. The majority of mental processes gives the view of internalized state of characters, their thoughts and feelings.

Text F also portrays an important episode of events in Fereiba's life. After her husband's execution, she decided to leave the country along with her children. Text F contains 12 sentences and 14 simple clauses. The processes in Text F are 26 out of which material are processes are 13 and existential process is only 1. The instances of relational, mental, verbal and behavioural processes are 3 of each. The material processes set out the active role of characters and changes in the extraneous world. The start of journey marks the occurrence of observable and concrete actions and activities. The reader can interpret the text based on the actions of the characters and make their judgements.

In the selected Text G Saleem, the son of Fereiba, got separated from his family in Greece. The selected excerpt has been taken from the later part of the novel and it is significant because it throws light on the life of refugees. Here, the viewpoint shifts from Fereiba to Saleem because they got separate and both will describe their own part of the story. Text G contains 9 sentences while the number of simple clauses is 13. The results of data analysis in table 9 illustrate total 23 processes. Material processes dominate the excerpt with the frequency of 12. Behavioural processes are 3 while the number of mental and verbal processes is 4 of each.

Text H has been extracted from chapter 35. Fereiba had to make a difficult choice about her journey. She faced the dilemma that whether she should stay and wait for Saleem in Greece or leave this country for the sake of her younger son Aziz. She described how difficult the choice was to leave her lost son behind. Text H is comprised of 10 sentences and 14 simple clauses. Total processes in the extract are 19 out of which the number of mental and material is 7 of each. Verbal processes are 3 while relational process and existential process occur once in the selected text. Material processes highlights the event or actions happening in the extraneous world, the activities which the leading character performs. On the other hand, mental processes notify the actions of inner state of characters, they talk about the perception, cognition and choices of the characters.

Text I, selected for transitivity analysis, occur in the chapter 45 of the novel. The extract depicts the bittersweet moments when Fereiba finally made it to England and met her sister. This extract has 9 sentences and 11 simple clauses. Total number of processes is 18. The number of material processes is higher than other processes. Material processes in this excerpt are 11. The number of mental processes and relational processes is equal, there are 2 instances of each process. Existential process, verbal process and behavioural process occur for once. All types of processes have been observed in Text I. But material processes dominate the text and present a vivid description of the things happening around characters.

Text J, the last text chosen for analysis has been taken from the last chapter (56) of the novel. This excerpt has been chosen because it closes the novel and describes what happens at the end of the novel. Text J contains 10 sentences while the instances of simple clauses are 13. The results of analysis in table 12 illustrates that the selected text has total 21 processes. It has 10 material processes, 4 mental processes, 3 relational processes, 2 behavioural processes and 2 verbal processes. Transitivity analysis has been performed by the researcher to unveil the experiential meaning. The researcher has adopted transitivity analysis because it is an effective tool for understanding and interpreting the meanings which the author has encoded in the language of the text. The material processes denote the actions performed by characters or the actions happening in the world

around them. While the use of mental processes helps the readers in understanding the circumstances of the characters, then the readers can develop their viewpoint about the characters. Both quantitative and qualitative findings has been presented and interpreted. The frequencies and percentages of transitivity components have been displayed and then the interpretation of the quantitative data has been presented to show that how the author employed transitivity in constructing the novel. The study also focuses on the transitivity analysis of selected excerpts to reveal the experiential meanings. The selected text excerpts have been analysed and interpreted. Transitivity model from SFL has been applied to point out that experiential meanings can be revealed through transitivity analysis.

4. CONCLUSION

The current research deals with the corpus-based transitivity analysis of a fictional work. The present study aims at exploring patterns of transitivity and revealing the experiential meanings. The research explores that how the author has used transitivity patterns to fabricate the text of the novel. The authors can make the linguistic choices to portray their experiences. In the fictional work under study, the author has used participants widely which shows that she focused more on the doer of actions and the recipient of these actions. Whereas, the frequency of processes is second highest, these processes denoted the actions, happenings, activities and doings. The number of circumstances appears relatively smaller. The author utilises the circumstances to provide the background information of actions and to create cohesion in text. Further, the study calculates and analyses the clause type.

The research is also concerned with revealing the experiential meanings through transitivity analysis. The transitivity analysis disclosed the experiential meanings and proved itself as an effective analytical tool for the textual analysis. The study explores different type of processes and examines what meanings they convey in the text.

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