

## The Representation of Transitivity Clauses in Iraqi EFL Learners' Literary Performance

تمثيل بنود التحول في الأداء الأدبي لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق

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### Abstract

The present study investigates the functions of representing transitivity clauses in Iraqi EFL learners' literary answers. The representation of transitivity clauses is a linguistic case in which the learner uses different processes to analyze literary items. To this end, the study adopts Halliday's SFG of transitivity processes to analyze students' answers of the third class of the English department in drama, *Hamlet*. The study concludes that transitivity processes are represented in learners' answers. Transitivity processes realized in the samples of literary answers of the third class of the English department are variant. Mental and verbal processes recur the highest degree of use among other transitivity processes, 25% each, whereas existential process scores the lowest, 1%.

**Keywords:** The Representation, Literary Performance, in Iraqi.

## المخلص:

يهدف البحث الى التحقق من تمثيل جمل التعدي في الإجابات الأدبية لمتعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة اجنبية في العراق. يعتبر تمثيل جمل التعدي حالة لغوية يستخدم فيها المتعلم أنواعًا مختلفة من عمليات التعدي لتحليل العناصر الأدبية. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف اعتمدت الدراسة على نموذج هاليدي في النحو الوظيفي للنظامي لعمليات التعدي لتحليل اجابات طلبة المرحلة الثالثة في قسم اللغة الانكليزية في مادة الدراما, مسرحية هاملت. استنتجت الدراسة ان عمليات التعدي قد تمثلت في اجابات طلبة المرحلة الثالثة وان عمليتي التعدي الذهنية واللفظية قد تكررت بشكل اعلى بين بقية عمليات التعدي, 25% لكل منهما بينما عملية التعدي الوجودية سجلت 1%.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تمثيل ، الأداء الادبي ، في العراق .

## 1 - Introduction

Transitivity describes the relationships between participants and the roles they play in the processes described in reporting an experience (Ritchardson 2007). It is concerned with the way in which the actions are represented and the kind of actions which appear in EFL learners' literary answers. Transitivity, representing different types of processes or experiences, consists of process, participant, and circumstance. Process realized by a verbal group is classified into material, relational, mental, verbal, behavioral, and existential processes. Nominal group realizes participants and circumstance is realized by adverbials or prepositional phrases.

This paper involves six main sections: introduction which prepares to the study. Then literature review, which shows some studies that concern with transitivity. Third section explains the meaning of transitivity, syntactic relation and semantic function. In fourth section the paper explains transitivity in English Language and classifies the types of processes. In methodology section we can find a corpus which is chosen from the third stage of English Department and analysis transitivity processes in their literary answers specific in drama.

## 2- Literature Review

There are many studies that deal with transitivity and its processes in literary and nonliterary texts, for example Arina Isti'anah from Sanata Dharma University (2018), Emi Emilia of Universitas pendidikan Indonesia

(2017), Dr Angelia Lu from Nanyang Tecnological University. (2012), and Mithaq Khamees Khalaf Al-Dulaimi of University of Anbar (2013).

Isti'anah finds that objective interpretations about texts can be reached by conducting transitivity analyses. Emilia provides recommendation in terms of how both teachers and students can develop gender awareness in the classroom practices through the use of the textbooks. Dr Angelia Lu said that the ESL students could be more vigilant in improving material clauses than relational clauses in scientific expository essays. Al-Dulaimi finds that the transitivity forms the very basis of representation reflecting the ideational function, while modality forms striking effects on shaping the interpretation of reader and showing the interpersonal function.

### 3-Transitivity

Transitivity is a grade of grammatical structures which is widely used for specific communicative functions. The syntactic relations of transitivity outline the relationship between the noun phrase(s) and verb phrase in each syntactic structure. Semantically, the notion of transitivity is opined as being an action expressed by the verb and transferred from the subject to the object. The action of " doing" is not only restricted to the "doer", but it transfers from the subject to the object; therefore, the verb in this case is called transitive. The communicative function of transitivity structure is confined by the function of process and participants, on the one hand, and the context in which transitivity is realized, on the other Al-Dulaimi (2013, p:8)

### 4- Literature Review

The present studies focus on the use of transitivity as a tool to explore characterization. Transitivity works as a tool to analyze the depiction of people's actions at a broader level (Halliday, 1994). The first study is based on the transitivity analysis carried out by Asad Mehmood, Rabia Faiz , Sobia Ameer and Roshan Amber (2014). They have a primary research finding inspecting the capacity of language as useful instrument in the short story "The Nightingale and the Rose" by Oscar Wilde in the light of Halliday's theoretical structure on transitivity. The most important point here is to introduce two perspectives of adoration by means of two remarkable

characters. They utilize a content analysis method. They postulate that the transitivity analysis of Wilde's short story *The Nightingale* and *The Rose* show how the activities are performed using material processes. We get a clearer thought from the verbal processes that shows the activities and as well as detecting conditions and circumstances. Furthermore, the social processes fortify this effect. The physical activities are distinguished through these processes with give an external perspective of the world depicted in the story.

The second study conducted by Tiejun (2007) about the using transitivity system on analyzing character *Cat in the Rain*. Tieu's study aims to verify uninterested relationships among people in the story by using a transitivity system through analyzing their types of processes. The third study focuses on analyzing character of Emily in *A Rose for Emily* short story by William Faulkner using transitivity system conducted by Song (2013). The study focused on identifying processes in the story and molding the character and analyzing their function of constructing theme. We conclude from these studies how we can use the tool of transitivity in understanding characterization.

## 5- Teaching the Language of Literature

Teaching literature is one of the most important parts of language teaching in ESL classes because it develops their language skills, language structures and it also develops their personalities and critical thinking. Literature is not for advanced students but also for beginners and young learners that can help them to acquire many language items in an enjoyable way by using stories, easy texts, and poems.

Teachers can use some models through the use of literature in the ESL classes as Ronald Corter and Micheal N. Long (1991) suggest: "the cultural model", "the language model" and "the personal growth model". "The cultural modal" helps the students to obtain information about the authors, cultural trend and also about historical background. The learners can learn both culture and literature and will be able to understand different cultures and value them. "The language model" is related with the language based

approaches in which language structures are imposed and reinforced. The learners can improve their skills like listening, reading, writing and speaking.

The last model is “the personal growth model”, which includes the other two, and also refers to the students’ growth as individuals. Its help the students to think creatively, aesthetic taste, develop the students’ imagination, all these being of importance for their future development. The reading of the text should be followed by different types of activities, like comprehensions and interpretation. Teacher should use summaries and comprehension questions in order the check the understanding of the plot. It can create activities that are more interesting by making up a summary or arranging disorder sentences, all these can be successful used for teaching difficult text.

## 6-Transitivity system

The grammatical system used to fulfil the meaning in a text is transitivity system. In transitivity system, the analysis is carried out at clause level. Clauses has major position to functional grammar because it includes the sequences of identical meanings. Any clause can be divided into two, the first one is minor clause and the second one is major clause. In the minor clause there is no predicator while in the major clause there is a predicator. Major clause distinguished between dependent and independent clauses. The main clause is a clause that can stand alone as a complete sentence, while additional clauses can’t stand alone and needs information to make sense.

Transitivity, in traditional grammar indicate to the verb whether it is transitive or intransitive. The initial verb taking a direct object while the last one cannot. Transitivity is a grammatical system, it transects with different types of process that can be found in the language and the structures. This is the system of transitivity (process type).

## 6- Semantic Function of Transitivity

Semantics can have the same level of importance with syntax. It is produced in Transformational Generative Grammar as one of the main components of grammar (phonology, syntax, and semantics). Dessaure, as a

structuralist, discusses the importance of meaning in his dichotomy, langue and parole, which becomes the basis for the study of semantics later.

The semantic definition of transitivity presupposes the syntactic definition (transitivity entail the presence of an object), but what sounds important is the idea of semantic transfer. The action is transferred (carried over from the subject to the object through the verb). Transitivity is produced when an action permits the transfer as in: Peter shot Pual VS Pual was shot by Peter .

De Mattia – Vivies states that the idea of transfer presupposes that the subject, in active structure, is agentive. The degree of agentivity is variable and depends on the verb as well. The notion of agentivity can be described as a " continuum " and as a consequence to the notion of transitivity as well. So, like agentivity, transitivity functions as a " continuum " (100).

De Mattia – Vivies adds, semantic transitivity does not always presuppose syntactic transitivity and syntactic transitivity does not necessarily present the transitive meaning. Some clauses may involve an object without conveying any idea of transfer from the subject to the object. Certain verbs can be syntactically transitive but not semantically which are of (S + V + O) relation since there is no implication of any idea of transfer from the subject to the object through the verb. This is the case of stative verb (Haliday 1985).

## 7- Transitivity in English Language

### 7.1 Types of processes

According to Halliday (1985) there are three interpretations of the clause according to its function- message, exchange, and representation. Each expresses one kind of semantic organization. This study deals with the clause as representation. The clause as representation consists of three elements: process, participant, and circumstance. The meaning of representation is related to the system of transitivity which specifies both the different kinds of process which are recognized and the structures by which they are expressed. A process consists of three components explained in the following example:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_ The lion chased the tourist lazily through the bush.

\*Process realized by verbal group "chased "

\*Participant realized by nominal group. " The lion" and " the tourist".

\*circumstance realized by adverbial group or prepositional phrase. "lazily" and " through the bush" (Halliday, "1985", p102).

Quirk et al (1985) focus on what semantic roles of all constituents of transitive structure (subject, object, complement) in the clause can take (740-54). The participant's roles depend on the process type in which they occur. The process is the core of an experience. It can be distinguished into: (1) material, (2) mental, (3) verbal, (4) behavioural, (5) relational and (6) existential. Halliday argues that these types and particular kinds of the participant role that are systematically associated with each. First, the major process types are "action" classified by Halliday as "material", "relational", and "mental". Second, the "behavioural", "verbal", and "existential" processes.

The material process, as Halliday states, is of a "doing" type, and can be stated by asking " what did it do?" or "what happened to it?". Material process has the function of "actor" and "goal" associated with it ("1985", p: 101-30):

\_ The lion caught the tourist. (actor ..... goal)

According to Halliday mental process requires four main reasons for considering it as a separate process type. First, the process requires a conscious participant which is not the case for material process. Second, mental process typically takes the simple present tense. Third, mental process is associated with the less focused tense form, the simple tense. Semantically, he distinguishes mental process of non-doing process nature ("1985", p: 108-10) "senser" the participant who " senses", and "phenomenon", the participant that is "sensed". Finally, Halliday recognizes further major semantic subclassifications of mental process such as " perception", "affection", and " cognition" ("1985", p: 111).

\_ I do not like it. (affect: senser ..... phenomenon)

Halliday discusses the function of relational process as "intensive", "circumstantial" , and "possessive" that each of them occurs in two modes : attributive and identifying .

\_ Peter has a car. (possessive: attributive) .

\_ Behavioural process is described as relating to physiological and psychological behaviour such as "breathing, dreaming, smiling, coughing “ . This process is a borderline between material and mental processes. The participant that is "behaving” is assigned by the role "behavior”.

Halliday compares this role with the " senser" in a mental process (“1985”, p: 129). These process types seem to be processes of "action" that typically occur with one participant only as in the following:

\_ I weep for you. (behavior)

Verbal process relates to any type of symbolic exchange of meaning. Halliday indicates that this process does not requires a conscious participant and it is possible to have a participant as " a watch" shown in:

My watch says it's ten o'clock.

This is the reason why "verbal" process might appropriately be called "symbolic” process (“1985”, P:129). The participant's role assigned by Halliday to this process type is "sayer”. Three other possible participants are suggested to occur with this process type: "receiver" being the person "to whom the verbalization is addressed", "verbiage" being what is said, and "target" being the target of verbs such as "insult, praise, slander, a buse, flatter". For instance:

I'm always praising you to my friends. (sayer, target, recipient)

\_ Existential process is the representation of something that exists or happens as in this example:

There was a little guinea pig.

According to this process, the subject "there" has no representational function. Typically, this process type will take the verb "be" which is followed by a nominal group recognized as "existent". Also, this type of clause will often contain a distinct circumstantial element.

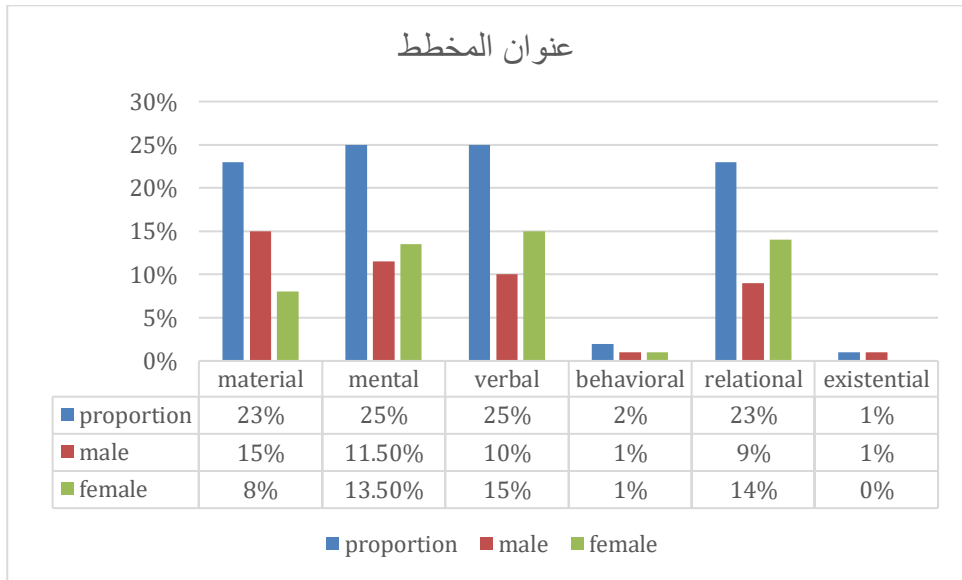
## 8- Methodology

### 8- 1- Data Collection:

This study corpus of the study was selected from the students' literary answers in drama of "Hamlet". Thirty students: 15 females and 15 males are chosen from the third stage of English department in academic year 2020-2021, 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester. Their answers are used to classify the transitivity process used in their answers.

### 8-2- Data analysis:

The analysis of data showed that the transitivity processes are variant depending on the students' opinions in EFL learners' answers. Mental and verbal processes occupy the stage of use. Material and relational processes take the second stage. The less use of processes are for behavioral and existential processes. The following figure show the average for each process:



## 9- Conclusions

This thesis deals with transitivity processes in Iraqi EFL learners' literary answers. There is an explanation of transitivity and its syntactic and semantic relation. It talks about transitivity processes and their use in literary answers in the corpus which is chosen.

Data were collected from the third stage of English department-second semester in 2020-2021. The analysis shows that the representation of transitivity forms the very basis of representation which reflects the ideational function, mental process and verbal process highly recur in" the representation of transitivity clauses in Iraqi EFL learners' literary answers" with an average of 25% for each. Students use these processes because they attempt to criticize the events in the literary texts especially in" Hamlet" character which is considered a character of thinking and speaking rather than doing. Material process and relational process occupy the second position for each with a 23% average. The less use is for behavioral process that recurs 2% and existential process that recurs 1%.

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