



## From Theory to Practice: Transitivity Analysis of Alfred Tennyson's Home They Brought Her Warrior Dead

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### ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the progression of the narrative and the psychological and emotional development of the major character in Home They Brought her Warrior Dead by applying Halliday's theory of transitivity. Transitivity patterns are useful to study the link between languages and thought. The study will pave the way to understanding the inner feelings of the widow, which are concealed by the poet by using different linguistic choices. In the first two stanzas of the poem, the widow does not show any sign of movement, whereas, in the third and fourth stanzas of the poem, action, and movement become the focus. Thus, there is a subtle narrative progression from the first two stanzas to the last two stanzas of the poem. The present study is a contribution to the field of Systemic Functional Linguistics and lexicogrammatical analysis, which originate with the frameworks of stylistics and foregrounded approaches to texts. However, Transitivity analysis is markedly different from traditional analysis as in the former approach text analysis is an explanatory activity (how a text means?), whereas, in the latter, the analysis is esteemed as an interpretive activity (what a text means?). The study is significant because it provides an analytical and objective tool for exploring meanings from the text by studying the relationship between the metafunctions and grammatical system, between the cultural context and the schematic structure of the text.

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## 1. Introduction

The foundation stone of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) was laid by M. A. K. Halliday (1978). In Systemic Linguistics, there is a predominant interest in how people use language with each other in order to accomplish social life activities. Eggins (2004) believes that this interest leads Systemic Linguistics to advance four main theoretical claims about language.

- Language use is functional
- Its function is to make meanings
- These meanings are influenced by the social and cultural context in which they are exchanged.
- And the process of using language is a semiotic process, a process of making meanings by choosing.

The fundamental point about these three metafunctions is that they are fused together in a linguistic unit and language is being organized in such a way that compel the speaker(s) or to make sets of choices. Therefore, it is the unique feature of communication that every choice

contributes in the meaning making process and it is evident that language is a tool which we use by making different choices to create meaning in different contexts.

Transitivity analysis has been used by many researchers for their research (Hidayat, Nababan, & Djatmika, 2019; Lestari, Djatmika, Sumarlam, & Purnanto, 2019). Alraimi and Abdalla (2019); Shah and Alyas (2019) used transitivity analysis for the political discourse and identified different metafunctions in the speeches of world leaders at different forums. Mushtaq, Saleem, Afzal, and Saleem (2021) worked on A corpus-based ideational meta-functional analysis of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's speech at United Nations general assembly. Transitivity analysis has been also used for the literary texts. Sari and Yulianto (2019) analysed Oscar Wilde's Writing Style in "The Happy Prince" in View of Transitivity Analysis Afrianto and Seomantri (2014) conducted Transitivity analysis on Shakespeare's Sonnets. Haroon and Arslan (2021) applied Transitivity analysis of 'The Old Building' by Imdad Hussein by using corpus tool. Qasim, Qasim, and Arshad (2021) conducted Transitivity Analysis of Iqbal's Mukalma Jibra. il-o-Iblis (Gabriel and Lucifer). Emodi (2022) explored investigated Proverbs in Achebe's A Man of the People by using Transitivity Analysis.

## **2. Three Metafunctions**

### **2.1 Experiential Meanings**

It represents experience in language. Whatever use we put language to, we are always talking about something or someone doing something.

### **2.2 Interpersonal Meanings**

It depicts our role relationships with other people and our attitudes to each other. Whatever use we put language to we are always expressing an attitude and taking up a role.

### **2.3 Textual Meanings**

It deals with what we are saying hangs together and relates to what was said before and to the context around us.

In order to identify the above stated three types of meanings, we need to describe its lexico-grammatical organization or patterns of the clauses of the text. In lexico-grammatical analysis, we find that these three kinds of meanings respond to transitivity, theme and mood respectively. In order to understand the experiential meanings being expressed in a text, we examine the transitivity structure of its clause, but if we wish to understand the interpersonal meanings being made, we look at the mood structures of the clauses and if we are focusing on textual meanings, we examine the thematic structure of the clauses that make up the text. As a result, if we want to describe the meanings of the text, we focus on the structure of the clause. And to do this we need to acquire skills in grammatical analysis and a technical vocabulary to describe the mood, transitivity and themes patterns in the text.

Mood structure of the clause refers to the interpersonal meaning of the text which is expressed through the particular choices in separate clauses. Mood includes pattern of;

- Type of clause structure used, e.g., declarative, imperative, interrogative
- Modality: it includes
  - Modalization i.e. expression of probability, tentatively, assurance or frequency
  - Modulation i.e. expressions of obligation, necessity, or attitude
  - Attitude i.e. expression of positive and negative attitude.

Textual meaning of the text is expressed through the pattern of theme and the reiteration of thematic choices express the textual meaning being made in the text. Thematic analysis includes the study of theme and rhyme. The Systemic approach is systemic approach is inherently fruitful because;

- It explores the systemic modal of language (how language works etc)
- It equips with a set of techniques for analyzing different aspects of the language system (transitivity, theme etc).

### **3. Difference between Traditional and Systemic Approaches to Text**

Both the above mentioned approaches deal with the question that "why a text means what it does"? but the difference lies in the modus operandi of approaching the text. In traditional approaches to the study of text, the analysis is esteemed as an interpretive activity. The text is explored with the intention of unfolding the meaning of the text the writer was making in the text. However, in SFL, text analysis is not an interpretive activity but an explanatory activity. In the former approach, text analysis revolves around the question what a text means?, whereas, in the latter approach, text analysis focuses on the question how a text means? The interesting fact about SFL is that while addressing the question how a text means, all encompassing---we are also dealing with the what-aspect of the text.

Another important distinction between the traditional approaches and SFL is that the former deals with the evaluative aspect of the text, whereas, the latter paves the way for understanding of the text. SFL provides an effective tool for exploring the meaning of the text by focusing on the relationship between the metafunctions and grammatical system, between the cultural context and the schematic structure of the text.

### **4. Data and Methodology**

M. Halliday and Matthiessen (1994) has identified three components in transitivity system:

- The selection of a process.
- The selection of Participants in the process
- The selection of Circumstances associated with the process

As a theoretical framework Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is employed in this study.

#### **4.1 Types of Transitivity Processes**

##### **4.1.1 Material processes**

It involves process of doing—usually concrete, real tangible actions.

##### **4.1.2 Actor**

One who does the deed or perform the action.

##### **4.1.3 Goal**

The goal is that participant at whom the process is directed,

##### **4.1.4 Beneficiary**

Participants which benefit from the process are called beneficiary.

##### **4.1.5 Circumstances**

It is realized by adverbial groups or prepositional phrases.

#### **4.2 Mental process**

It is concerned with minding, sensing and thinking

#### **4.3 Behavioural processes**

It is half way between mental and material processes e.g. watch, dream, laugh breath, taste, smile, sneeze, look, mind, cough etc.

#### **4.4 Verbal processes**

It is the processes of verbal action, that is, saying and all its synonyms.

#### **4.5 Existential processes**

It asserts that something exist or happens. It represents experience by including a dummy subject 'there is /was...'

#### 4.6 Relational processes

Relational processes relate some attribute or identity to some being, and are often realized by the verbs be, seem, appear, become, own, have, etc.

#### 4.7 Attributive process

It expresses a quality, classification or descriptive epithet or attribute assigned to a participant (carrier).

#### 4.8 Identifying processes

It contrasts with the attributive both semantically and grammatically.

#### 4.9 Determination of attributive or identifying clause

If the clause has no passive form, then the clause must be attributive. A clause would be identifying, if passive voice can be formed. Bloor (2004) has identified the following processes and the participants.

**Table 1**

Process types	Participants
Material	actor, goal, beneficiary, scope, initiator (rare)
Mental	senser, phenomenon
Relational	carrier, attribute, identified, identifier
verbal	sayer, quoted/reported, verbiage, target, receiver
Existential	Existent
Behavioural	behave, behaviour (rare)

### 5. Analysis of the text

A text can be analyzed from different perspectives, depending upon the fact that which aspect of a text appeals or carries interest. The interest could be because of the context which is realized in the text or because of specific linguistic features being used. The researcher is interested in approaching the text from below-identifying peculiar linguistic features of the text and then relates its significance.

The advantage of approaching the text in a technical way-discourse semantics or lexico grammatical way is that it provides an objective tool for analysis.

#### 5.1 Transitivity analysis of Alfred Tennyson's *Home they brought her warrior dead*

The transitivity analysis is concerned with who does what to whom/what, where, when, how and why.

The poem is written by Alfred Tennyson and is divided into four stanzas. The apparent impression of the poem is that it depicts the response of a wife who is traumatized by the death of her husband in a battlefield. The poem tries to highlight the intensity of the wife's emotion as conveyed by the poet.

On seeing the dead body of her husband, the lady was so grief-stricken and benumbed that she neither fainted nor cried out. The absence of any visible expression of grief made the maidens attending her worried and apprehensive of imminent danger to her life. The choice of words shows that the poet wants to put the primary focus on the lady who was the center of attention and concern at the moment. He is her warrior, so the point of reference is the lady not her dead husband.

#### 5.2 Transitivity Analysis

The processes are underlined and put into two columns. Since material process is great in number, so a separate column is developed for material process.

**Table 2: Processes in the Poem**

Clauses with material process		Clauses with other process	
<b>1</b>	Home they <u>brought</u> her warrior dead:		
<b>2a</b>	She nor <u>swooned</u> ,	<b>2b</b>	nor <u>uttered</u> cry:
		<b>3</b>	All her maidens, <u>watching</u> , <u>said</u> ,

4	'She <u>must weep</u> or she will die.'	5	Then they <u>praised</u> him, soft and low,
		6	<u>Called</u> him worthy to be loved,
7	Truest friend and noblest foe;		
8	nor <u>moved</u> .	7	Yet she neither <u>spoke</u>
9	<u>Stole</u> a maiden from her place,		
10	Lightly to the warrior <u>stepped</u> ,		
11	<u>Took</u> the face-cloth from the face;		
12	Yet she neither <u>moved</u> nor <u>wept</u>		
12	<u>Rose</u> a nurse of ninety years,		
14	<u>Set</u> his child upon her knee--		
15	Like summer tempest <u>came</u> her tears--		
15	'Sweet my child, I <u>live</u> for thee.		

**Table 3: Summary of the processes**

Processes Type	Frequency
Material	13
Mental	1
Behavioral	1
Verbal	4
Existential	0
Relational	0
Total Number	19

As this table shows, material processes are dominant in all texts: 13 out of 19. This indicates that the text in stanza 2 and 3 is concerned with actions and events.

**Table 4: Line 1: Structural**

Home	they	brought	Her Warrior dead
Adjunct	Subject	finite	Pred
			Complement

**Table 5: Ideational**

Home	they	brought	Her Warrior dead
Circumstance	Actor	Material Process	Goal

The poem starts with the main topic, that is, the dead body of the warrior is brought home. In the very first line the verb "brought" is a material process and those who have brought the body are not mentioned. From the word "they" the researcher cannot determine the exact nature of the actor. The dead body of the warrior is the goal or centre of interest. The opening gives us a clue that the poem revolves around the dead body of the warrior. So the material process is goal oriented.

**Table 6: Line 2: Structural**

She	nor	swooned	Nor	uttered	cry
Subject	Adjunct	finite	Pred	Adjunct	finite
				Pred	Pred

**Table 7: Ideational**

She	nor	Swooned	nor	(She)Uttered	cry
Behave		Behavioural Process		Sayer /Verbal Process	Verbiage

In line 2, the poet makes use of two processes- behavioural and verbal. The poet depicts the response of the widow by using the words swooned (behavioural process) and uttered (verbal process). The poet moves from the material process to the behavioural and verbal process to highlight physiological and psychological condition of the widow. In the first clause, the widow is behavior, whereas, in the second clause the widow is sayer. The interesting fact the word "nor" with both of the processes shows that the sayer and behavior performed none of the process. So far we have come across with a material process of whose the actor is not known.

**Table 8: Line 3: Structural**

All her maidens	watching	Said
Subject	Finite Pred	finite Pred

**Table 9: Ideational**

All her maidens	watching	Said
Behaver/Sayers	Behavioural Process	Verbal Process

In line three the poet introduces maidens in the poem. Like previous line the processes identified are behavioural and verbal. In the line the poet depicts that the maidens are watching the whole scene. Importantly, no action is performed so far.

**Table 10: Line 4: Structural**

She	must weep	or	she	will die
Subject	Pred		Subject	Pred

**Table 11: Ideational**

She must weep or She will die
Verbiage

Line 4 is the continuation of the previous line. It is a verbiage in which the maidens stress the need of sorrowfulness on the part of the widow. In other words, this line is the projection of the previous line

**Table 12: Line 5: Structural**

Then	they	Praised	him	Soft and low
	Subject	finite Pred	Adjunct	Complement

**Table 13: Ideational**

Then	they	Praised	Him	Soft and low
	senser	Mental Process	Phenomenon	Circ: manner

In line 5 the word "praised" is a mental process and shows the feeling of the maidens about the warrior. The word "they" is senser and the warrior (him) is phenomenon. Interesting, no material process or action has been performed so far.

**Table 14: Line 6: Structural**

Called	Him	Worthy to be loved
Finite Predicate	adjunct	Complement

**Table 15: Ideational**

Called	him	Worthy to be loved
Verbal Process	receiver	Verbiage

Line 6 starts with a verbal process in which the maidens a sayer (they). The poet mentions the warrior as him (receiver) and the verbiage is "worth to be loved". In other words the maidens eulogize the warrior as an admirable personality. In other words, it is a projection of the previous line.

**Table 16: Line 7: Structural**

Truest	Friend	And	noblest	foe
Adjunct	Subject		Adjunct	complement

**Table 17: Ideational**

Truest friend and noblest foe
Verbiage

Line 7 is the continuation of the previous line. The verbiage is about the qualities of the warrior. In other words, it is projection of the previous line.

**Table 18: Line 8: Structural**

Yet	She	neither	spoke	nor	Moved
Adjunct	Subject	Adjunct	finite Pred	Adjunct	finite Pred

**Table 19: Ideational**

Yet	she	neither	Spoke	nor	Moved
	Sayer/actor		Verbal process		Material Process

In line 8, the poet again brings into focus the widow of the warrior. The line carries a parallel structure with the line 2 of the poem. In this line verbal and material processes are mentioned by the poet. The word "she" refers to the widow who is sayer and actor in the clauses respectively. In both the lines behavioural, verbal and material process are mentioned but none of the processes takes place.

It is worth mentioned that from line 2 to line 8, the processes are predominantly verbal and behavioural. The material and behavioural processes are mentioned but none of the action virtually takes place. From line 9 to line 16, there is shift, that is, the action starts and all the clauses carries material process. So there is a clear cut division in the poem in terms of processes.

**Table 20: Line 9: Structural**

Stole	a maiden	From her place
Finite Pred	Subject	Adjunct

**Table 21: Ideational**

Stole	a maiden	From her place
Material Process	Actor	Circumstances

In line 9, one of the maidens is actor of the process and the word stole is used for the material process along with the circumstance of location (from her place). Here, for the first time, action starts but the action is not that of concrete nature.

**Table 22: Line 10: Structural**

Lightly	To the warrior	Stepped
Adjunct	complement	Finite pred

**Table 23: Ideational**

Lightly	To the warrior	Stepped
Circ: manner	Goal	Material Process

Line 10 is the continuation of the previous line. The clause has a goal (to the warrior) and a material process (stepped) along with circumstance of manner (lightly). The clause is goal oriented and the actor refers back.

**Table 24: Line 11: Structural**

Took	the face-cloth	from the face
Finite Pred	complement	Adjunct

**Table 25: Ideational**

Took	the face cloth	from the face
Material Process	Goal	Circumstance: location

Line 11 is also the continuation of the previous line. The clause has a goal (the face cloth) and a material process (took) along with circumstance of manner of location (form the face). The clause is goal oriented and the material process refers back.

**Table 26: Line 12: Structural**

Yet	She	neither	moved	nor	wept
Adjunct	Subject	Adjunct	finite Pred	Adjunct	finite Pred

**Table 27: Ideational**

Yet	She	neither	Moved	nor	wept
	Actor/Senser		Material process		Mental Process

In line 12 the poet again brings into focus the widow of the warrior. The line carries the parallel structure with the line 2 and line 8 of the poem. In this line, material and mental process are mentioned by the poet. The word "she" refers to the widow who is actor and sensor in the clauses respectively. In these three lines behavioural, verbal and material process are mentioned but none of the processes takes place. In line 2 and 8, the word nor is used with the processes but in line 12 the word neither is also used with the processes to startle the readers.

**Table 28: Line 13: Structural**

Rose	a nurse	of ninety years
Pred	Finite	Subject
		Adjunct

**Table 29: Ideational**

Rose	a nurse	of ninety years
Material process	Actor	Circumstance

In line 13 another participant (nurse) has been introduced. The nurse performed the concluding action in the poem. In this line, actor, material process and circumstance are mentioned without goal.

**Table 30: Line 14: Structural**

Set	her child	upon her knee
Pred	Finite	complement
		Adjunct

**Table 31: Ideational**

Set	her child	upon her knee
Material process	goal	Circ:loc

The line 14 is very important as the child of the warrior is center of the interest (goal). The child is a kind of binding force between the warrior and the Widow.

**Table 32: Line 15: Structural**

Like summer tempest	came	her tears
Pred	Finite	finite pred
		Adjunct

**Table 33: Ideational**

Like summer tempest	came	her tears
Circumstance	Material process	Goal

Line 15 is the continuation of the previous line. When the nurse set her child upon her knee the tears of the widow come like summer tempest. The widow is actor and the word "came" refers to material process, the goal is "tears" and circumstance is "like summer tempest".

**Table 34: Line 16: Structural**

Sweet	My child	I	live	for thee
Adjunct	complement	Subject	Pred	Finite
				Adjunct

**Table 35: Ideational**

Sweet my child	I	live	for thee
Goal	Actor	Material Process	Goal



The concluding line has a distinctive feature that goal is mentioned twice in the line and goal refers to the warrior. So the poem starts with the warrior as a goal and ends with the warrior's child as a goal but in the concluding line the child is mentioned twice. The last line shows that now the widow is out of trauma and her last hope is her child and she uttered the word "Sweet my child I live for thee". In the last line "sweet my child" and "for thee" are goal, I (widow) is the actor and "live" is the material process in the clause.

## 6. Conclusion

There is a pattern in the presentation of the maidens. In the third and fifth lines, we get a collective presentation of the maidens, in the ninth and the thirteenth lines it is an individual presentation. While the collective effort of the maidens did not yield the desired result, the individual effort of a particular nurse achieved the objective.

In the first two stanzas of the poem, the maidens did not show any sign of movement. They watched, said, praised him and they called him worthy to be loved. But in the third stanza of the poem there is a sudden shift, a maiden stole from her place, went to the dead body and removed the face cloth from the warrior's face. In the fourth stanza, a ninety year old nurse gets up and sets her child on the knees of the wife of the dead warrior. Thus there is opposition in the first two stanzas and the last two stanzas of the poem. In the third and fourth stanzas of the poem, action and movement becomes the focus. By using stole and rose, the poet emphasizes the importance of these two material processes in the overall atmosphere of inaction.

An attempt has been made to apply SFL to a text in order to show that the analysis equips us to highlight the important features of the text and to relate those patterns to the cultural and situational contexts of which they are the realization. Further, the study will prove beneficial because it provides a very useful theoretical and analytical framework for exploring and explaining how texts mean. Stylistics in the past focused on foregrounding examples of linguistics and stylistic deviance. The present study seeks to highlight the main features and meanings in a text. The researchers hope that this study will contribute towards an understanding of how linguistic and stylistic analysis of a text can be used to clarify features and meanings in literary and non-literary texts.

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