

The Ideological Manifestation of Transitivity Process: A Critical Stylistic Analysis

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Ideology is a mental framework that is constructed, communicated, negotiated, and reproduced by means of language, including the transitivity process. As a typical grammatical phenomenon, the transitivity process is implied in four basic processes: relational, mental, material, and verbalization. The current paper detects the ideological implication of these four processes in Walker's novel *The Color Purple*, which deals with African-American women's persecution. The study aims to show how this concept is represented through the four categories of transitivity process. Additionally, it aims to reveal the ideological impact of the transitivity process in Walker's novel. The extracts that clearly show men's oppression of women are analyzed using Simpson's (1993) transitivity model, which is included in Jeffries' (2010) framework. The researchers find out that Alice Walker uses the four categories of transitivity with different circulation to refer to black women's oppression, which is implemented by even those who belong to the same race (black). Furthermore, mental and material processes are primarily used to deliver negative and contradictory ideologies that accompany women's persecution. These ideologies are man's dominance and woman's submission. Moreover, relational and verbalization processes are dedicated to offering a hint at women's individuality and freedom. This in turn reflects Walker's optimism and hope that women's persecution will soon have no survival in their society.

Keywords: Transitivity, Alice Walker, Oppression, Ideology, Critical Stylistic

1. Introduction

Critical stylistics refers to an approach of language analysis connected with the British researcher Lesley Jeffries (2007) who studies the impact of female's ideologies in society. According to Coffey (2013), critical stylistics delivers the lacking associations between stylistics that deals with the textual choices and critical discourse analysis which involves ideology. Jeffries (2010) offers a pattern of regular toolkits dedicated to uncover the ideologies which lie behind the producer's language. In Asensio's view (2016), the basic concern in critical studies is ideology which is rooted in the discursive practices. He adds (2016) that it is the researcher's part to define the means where language and ideology relate. For Jeffries (2010, p. 5), the term 'ideology' denotes "those ideas that are shared by a community or society [...] are a very important aspect of the world that we live in, and they are, of course, communicated, reproduced, constructed and negotiated through language." Transitivity process is one of the linguistic practices that is implemented by writers to achieve an ideological impact in the text. Simpson (1993, p. 88) mentions that transitivity shows how the clause symbolizes meaning. This meaning represents Halliday's ideational metafunction that describes "experience" in terms of "processes" whether states of being, events, or actions as in: *The shop is down* (state); *The house burned* (event); *The player kicked the ball* (action). Jeffries (2010, p. 50) elaborates more on transitivity and states that it concerns with the textual meaning which illuminates the structures meaning. She confirms the fact that textual meaning has the same importance of form in language. The current paper displays how transitivity process assists in exposing the hidden ideologies that go hand in hand with woman's oppression. The American feminine novel *The Color Purple* is chosen as a sample for analysis in this study. In this work, Alice Walker presents a portrayal of African-American women who are maltreated and abused by even those men who belong to the same race (black). Thus, the researchers seek to find answers to the following questions:

- 1- How is transitivity process as a conceptual tool represented in *The Color Purple*?
- 2- What is the most/ least process of transitivity that signifies women's oppression in the novel?
- 3-What is the ideological implication of transitivity in the selected data?

Aims of the Research

The study aims at:

- 1- Identifying the categories of transitivity process employed by Alice Walker to reveal woman's oppression in the data under scrutiny.
- 2- Pointing out the most/least process of transitivity that is utilized in *The Color Purple* to echo the concept under investigation.
- 3- Uncovering the hidden ideology (ies) that lie behind the novelist's language.

The next subsections present review of literature regarding the issue of transitivity process and woman's oppression. Then, an explanation of Simpson's model (1993) of transitivity, methodology and data analysis are introduced. Finally, discussion of results and conclusions are offered.

2- Review of Literature

Transitivity process is one of the toolkits contained in Jeffries framework (2010) that has a crucial ideological impact in any discourse no matter what its genre is, i.e. political, literary, media, ...etc.. The significance of transitivity is revealed in critical discourse study as well as stylistics which are based on the textual meaning. This explains why transitivity process is engaged in these two fields namely: stylistics and critical discourse analysis. Coffey (2013, p.72) adds that the ideational function in the clause has a close connection with the participants' implication. Thus, it is possible to utilize transitivity for detecting writer's ideologies in any text. Likewise, Jeffries (2014b, p. 413) mentions that the speaker's choice for a specific verb may change the hearer's opinion towards a certain issue. Various studies have utilized transitivity as an analytical tool for examining and comprehending the typical meaning that is determined via linguistic patterns. Examples of these studies are those which are carried out by Sharififar & Rahimi (2015) and Zhang (2017). The concept of woman's oppression so far has been tackled by some researchers like Aksehir (2017) and Srinivas (2016) who have examined woman's oppression from literary or psychological perspective. Still, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, no previous study has tackled this concept with reference to transitivity process. Consequently, to enrich the linguistic arena of transitivity process with new data for analysis and fill in the gap existing in the literature linked with this issue of woman's oppression, this paper is conducted.

3- Representing Actions/ Events and States Tool

Jeffries (2010) illuminates that it is possible for a speaker to expose a problem as a state of affairs in a present simple tense, an event in a present progressive, or an action in a present perfect. She prefers Simpson's (1993) model of transitivity because she believes that this model is more operational than Halliday's (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). The transitivity processes stated in his model are verbalization process, mental cognition process, material action process, and relational process. Jeffries (2010, p. 42) considers verbalization process to be a way of referring to an action achieved by a human actor. In this aspect, verbalization is similar to the material process which is performed by a human actor. The participants of verbalization process are the sayer, some verbiage which is not often present,

and a target. Regarding relational process, it reveals the stable bond between carriers and attributes. For mental process, it takes place in human minds. It is subdivided into: mental cognition like thinking, remembering, realizing, ...etc., mental reaction such as hating, liking.....etc., and lastly mental perception which covers hearing, sensing, seeing...etc. The four processes of transitivity are outlined in the table below with some examples:

Table 1

The Models of Transitivity after Simpson (1993)

The process	Participants	Sub categories
Verbalization Process	Sayer, Verbiage, Goal (e.g., The mother said John was not here)	
Mental Process	Senser, Phenomenon	- Cognition (e.g., She considered the issue) - Reaction (e.g., He dislikes this subject at school!) - Perception (e.g. I taste the soup)
Material Process	Actor, Goal	- Intention(e.g., He kicked the ball) - Supervention (e.g., my son fell down) Event (e.g., Her house burned)
Relational Processes	Carrier, Attribute	- Intensive (e.g., He is my nephew) - Possessive (I have a cat) - Circumstantial (The shops are near)

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Description

The modernist feminine novel *The Color Purple* is chosen as a sample for the current study because it is one of Walker’s prominent novels; It has gained Pulitzer Prize in 1982. Therefore, *The Color Purple* has a crucial value and an actual influence in American fictions.

3.2. The Nature of the Present Study

The researchers adopt a blending method of qualitative and quantitative approaches in the analysis. In Fuentes’ view (2008, P.1592), this mixture of approaches give “richer detail than either method can generate alone.” For the present paper, qualitative approach is utilized by investigating the categories of transitivity process mentioned in Simpson’s model (1993) that represent women’s oppression in the text. Further, content analysis is the tool for the quantitative approach. It is, according to Krippendoff (1980, p. 21), “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context”. In content analysis, Neuendorf (2002, p. 5-7) states, the frequencies of words are detected to gain further interpretations. Consequently, some statistics are offered to support the qualitative method and lead the researchers for more explanations and conclusions.

3.3. The Procedures of Analysis

In order to accomplish a comprehensible procedure of analysis, the researchers shape the analysis as the succeeding list displays:

1. Examining cautiously the concept of women's oppression throughout the novel.
2. Electing the extracts that greatly employ woman's oppression.
3. Illuminating the textual meaning by explaining the link between transitivity process exemplified through various sets of verbs and the textual meaning.
4. Explaining the themes explored through transitivity process which then lead to uncover the hidden ideologies that accompany woman's oppression.

4. Data Analysis

The extracts that are chosen for the analysis in *The Color Purple* are the speculations of mainly female characters. The characters are Celie who is the heroine in the novel, Celie's mother, and Sofia who is Celie's step daughter. In these extracts, women's oppression is recognized from a critical stylistic viewpoint employing the transitivity process. Some samples are offered next:

Extract 1

In her letter to God, Celie mentions an incident that has taken place between her mother and her step-father:

"Last spring after little Lucious come I heard them fussing. He was pulling on her arm. She say It too soon, Fonso, I ain't well. Finally he leave her alone. A week go by, he pulling on her arm again. She say Naw, I ain't gonna. Can't you see I'm already half dead, an all of these chilren." (p. 17)

The first oppressed woman presented in *The Color Purple* is Celie's mother who is mentioned exclusively in this extract. This justifies the significance of this extract that describes the endless abuse of the mother which is performed by the husband, Fonso. The four groups of transitivity arise here. These are: material process (intention) symbolized in the two verbs "pull on" and "leave," mental process (perception) signified in the verb "hear," the relational process represented in verb "be" and finally verbalization represented in the verb "say." Consider the following sentences:

- 1- "*He was pulling on her arm*". (Material process, intention)
- 2- "*Finally he leave her alone.*" (Material process, intention)
- 3- "*Last spring after little Lucious come I heard them fussing.*" (Mental process, perception)
- 4- "*Can't you see I'm already half dead, an all of these chilren.*" (Relational process, intensive)
- 5- "*She say Naw, I ain't gonna.*" (Verbalization, the sayer is Celie's mother and the verbiage is "*I ain't gonna*")

Here, Walker offers an image of the passive woman who accepts blindly the continuous oppression, bodily abuse, and cruelty from an intimate partner, her husband. This detail is shown in the verb "pull" that is usually stated in talking about animals or non-human things. Yet, the wife seems to accept Fonso's abuse and her sickness is the only defense for her rebellion. Additionally, the verb "hear" exposes how the mother's children, Celie and

Lucious, have realized that scenario and apprehended clearly the extent of their mother's submission and weakness.

Considering the relational intensive verb "be" in the sentence "*Can't you see I'm already half dead, an all of these children,*" it pinpoints Celie's mother as an ill woman for giving birth several children. She defines herself as "half dead" to indicate the extent of tiredness. Moreover, she intends to disclose how the physical relationship with her husband turns her entirely to a lifeless person since such act lacks humanity. Furthermore, introducing the mother as a sayer signified in the verb "say" in the sentences: "She say It too soon, Fonso, I ain't well" and "Naw, I ain't gonna" expresses two crucial issues. The first issue is the truthfulness of the mother's suffering and misery. The second issue is the mother's enthusiasm to stand against her partner's will as an attempt to gain freedom and independence.

Thus, since the beginning of the novel, Walker introduces a portrayal of the African-American woman who witnesses no respect to her individuality. However, the mother's rejection to obey her husband presents a suggestion to woman's denial to man's tyranny in the future.

Extract 2

Celie talks to God:

"I spend my wedding day running from the oldest boy. He twelve. His mama died in his arms and he don't want to hear nothing bout no new one. He pick up a rock and laid my head open. The blood run all down tween my breasts." (p.28)

Walker introduces the heroine of her novel, Celie, as a woman who experiences physical abuse that is performed by the oldest son of her husband. That is, Celie is exposed to persecution from the man whom she regards as her son and this certainly increases the depth of her agony. The material verb "spend" in the sentence "*I spend my wedding day running from the oldest boy*" illustrates the event of oppression that is taken place to Celie during the night of her wedding. Again, the material verb "die" in the sentence "*His mama died in his arms and he don't want to hear nothing bout no new one*" enlightens the motive behind the son's aggression. The relational process that is characterized in the verb "be" categorizes the performer of that non-human act as the oldest son who has viewed his mother's death. Accordingly, the relational process assists in offering a logical justification for the son's abuse. This in turn reflects how Celie's marriage means spending life with aggressive rather than well-mannered teenagers.

The facts of the inhumane performance are revealed through the material process which is symbolized in the verbs "pickup" "laid" and "run" respectively as shown below:

6- "*He pick up a rock and laid my head open.*" (Material process, intention)

7- "*The blood run all down tween my breasts.*" (Material process, event)

Presenting even the little details in this incident such as the instrument "rock" uncovers not only the extent of the son's brutality but also the abundant psychological impact of this event on Celie's character. It is obvious then that material process is utilized to expose openly the act of woman's oppression whereas relational one presents an accurate depiction to the actors of that violent act.

Extract 3

Celie writes a letter to God talking about Sofia who is her step daughter –in-law:

“He jump up to put a hammer lock under her chin. She throw him. He fall bam up against the stove. She say, All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy.” (P.54)

Sofia is third oppressed woman in *The Color Purple*. She is Harpo’s wife who is the son of Celie’s husband. Through Sofia’s character, Walker introduces an image of the African-American woman who powerfully denies man’s domination. Her exposure to physical persecution from her husband and her resistance to that act are represented in the material verbs “jump up,” “put,” “throw,” and “fall,” as shown in the following sentences:

8- *“He jump up to put a hammer lock under her chin.” (Material process, intention)*

9- *“She throw him.” (Material process, intention)*

10- *“He fall bam up against the stove.” (Material process, supervention)*

Sofia’s intense reaction against Harpo’s brutality confirms her strong rejection to be submissive like Celie or her mother. Sofia’s struggle for freedom and her insistence to gain individuality is more indicated in the verbalization process that is symbolized in the verb “say” and the material verb “fight” as cited next:

11- *“She say, All my life I had to fight.” (Verbalization process, the sayer is Sofia, the verbiage is “All my life I had to fight”).*

12- *“I had to fight my daddy.” (Material process, intention)*

Hence, Sofia’s resistant nature is clearly revealed through verbalization process which designates how fighting and blood bleeding is essential for gaining woman’s liberation. Walker’s repeats twice the same clause “All my life I had to fight” to approve more how independency is closely linked with struggle and aggression.

Extract 4

Celie talks about Sofia’s situation when she visits her in prison:

“They crack her skull. They crack her ribs, they tear her nose loose on one side. They blind her in one eye; she swole from head to foot. Her tongue the size of my arm” (p.103)

In this extract, Walker presents an image of the black woman who exposes to oppression by men who belong to another race, the white. Through series of material verbs, Celie states how Sofia has exposed to physical abuse by the Mayor of the city. Then, she has been directed to prison because she has rejected to be a servant at a white woman’s house. The next sentences illustrate these verbs:

13- *“They crack her skull.” (Material process, intention)*

14- *“They crack her ribs.” (Material process, intention)*

15- *“They tear her nose loose on one side.” (Material process, intention)*

16- *“They blind her in one eye.” (Material process, intention)*

The underlined verbs above reveal the much extent of oppression which is performed by white people against the black. This in turn shows the former’s inhumanity and brutality. Additionally, Walker in the sentence “*Her tongue the size of my arm*” utilizes the relational process that is signified in the deleted verb “be” to describe Sofia’s tongue with its strange shape after being oppressed. Through such overstated description of Sofia’s tongue, Walker offers a suggestion that Sofia’s enthusiasm to gain individuality has no end.

Extract 5

Celie talks Mr. Albert, her husband:

“Every lick you hit me you will suffer twice, I say. I’m pore, I’m black. I may be ugly and can’t cook. But I’m here.” (p.220)

The last pages of *The color Purple* exclusively present Celie as a conqueror woman instead of being an oppressed one. Of course, Walker here offers a hint that the oppressed women in her society will soon gain freedom. The material verb “hit” in the sentence “*Every lick you hit me you will suffer twice, I say*” refers to Celie’s continuous exposure to physical abuse. Still, utilizing verbalization process which is represented by the verb “say” indicates Celie’s power and daring to face the performer of the oppression, i.e. her husband. In addition, the relational process that is shown through verb “be” in the sentence “*I’m pore, I’m black.*” recognizes Celie as a horrible woman. What is more is the blackness which enhances her hostility. Similar to other black women in African-American society, Celie, lacks attraction and beauty. However, Celie is a brave woman who is finally able to stand against the man who has oppressed her for years. Her power and identity is shown clearly through the relational verb “be” in the sentence “*But I’m here*”. Thus, the relational process here symbolizes the nearness of Celie to individuality as well as independence.

Considering the scattering of *Representing Actions, Events, States* tool in the novel, the four processes of transitivity i.e.: material, relational, mental, and verbalization are utilized with different distribution as shown in the following table:

Table 2

Distribution of Representing Actions, States, Events in The Color Purple

No.	Process	Frequency	Percentage
1	Material	40	41.23%
2	Relational	25	25.77%
3	Verbalization	20	20.61%
4	Mental	12	12.37 %
Total		97	100 %

5. Results and Discussion

Generally speaking, Walker devotes transitivity process to expose the inhuman acts that are performed by men against women characters in the novel. Regarding Celie's mother who is the first oppressed woman in the novel, the transitivity process is involved in her speech to reflect themes like cruelty, passivity, and physical abuse. Accordingly, the process helps in recognizing two basic negative ideologies that go along with woman's oppression. These are domination and persecution. In addition to themes such as verbal and physical abuse and through Celie's character, Walker utilizes transitivity process to exhibit negligence of physical needs and the lack of love. This in turn assists in bringing to the surface the ideology of bullying and inadequacy that appear hand in hand with oppression. Sofia is the third oppressed woman in *The Color Purple* whose speech comprises transitivity process that is used to show the physical abuse achieved by the white and denial to submission. Thus, Sofia's character is presented to disclose ethnic discrimination, injustice, and resistance which are totally negative ideologies.

As oppression means the violent acts that are achieved through some one against another. In Walker's view, the performer and the receiver of these actions are necessary to be mentioned and this fact justifies why material process is the most common one in the novel constituting 40 (41.23 %). Furthermore, relational type is operated with incidence 25 (25.77 %) to label the oppressed woman not only as miserable and depressed woman but also as heroic and courageous one. Regarding verbalization process that offers an account of woman's speech with regularity 20 (20.61%), it confirms two related concerns. First, the authenticity in what black woman states about her look which actually denotes confidence and self-esteem. Second, woman's fixed believe in her individuality and uniqueness. The reaction of the oppressed woman is represented through mental process with extent 12 (12.37 %). The low occurrence of this type relates to Walker's trend to emphasis the performance of oppression and struggle more than feelings and reactions.

6. Conclusion

As a textual-conceptual tool of analysis, *Representing Actions, Events, States* is crucial in offering woman's oppression in Walker's novel *The Color Purple*. The tool that manifests through material, mental, relational, and verbalization processes is utilized to represent woman's percussion. However, these processes occur with different scattering. Actions are designated through material and mental processes which are mainly dedicated to express the psychological and physical abuse that is acted by man against the black woman in African-American society. Thus, Walker's conveys two critical and contrasted ideologies through these two processes particularly. These are man's domination or power and woman's weakness and submission. Relational process is utilized by Walker to categorize the black woman as enthusiastic and determined character in spite of her gloomy life. This reflects the novelist's optimism to attain independence and individuality for black woman in near future. The identity of the black woman is revealed in the final scenarios of the novel and mostly through verbalization process. Through this process and as a social activist who represents the voice of the voiceless black women in her society, Walker declares openly that woman's oppression will soon has no existence in her society.

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