Transitivity Analysis of Ernest Hemingway's Novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*, Using Systemic Functional Grammar

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Abstract

This paper conducts a qualitative study on the transitivity processes in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, utilizing the Systemic Functional grammar framework proposed by Halliday (1978). Through purposive sampling, excerpts of the novella were chosen to represent diverse sets of processes, namely material, mental, behavioral, relational, verbal, and existential. The study seeks to describe the linguistic choices made and their systematic contribution to character arcs, theme, and plot in the novella. The findings highlight that the transitivity processes employed by Hemingway shape not only the psychological and emotional dimensions of the characters specifically, Santiago and the boy but also the key themes of the novella, which includes endurance, isolation, and the connection of humans to nature. The analysis shows that material and mental processes are critical in depicting the internal and external conflicts of the characters, while relational and existential processes define their identities and associations. This study stresses the relevance of transitivity analysis in literary scholarship, particularly the relationship between language and meaning in narrative fiction.

Keywords: Transitivity, Systemic-Functional Linguistics, Hemingway, The Old Man and the Sea

Introduction

The use of language is one of the most profound ways of social interaction since it enables humans to express their feelings and visualize thoughts and even shape and reflect social realities (Ojha, 2022; Raza et al, 2024). In any form of text, language is also central both to meaning creation and emotion depiction, considering the relationships among the characters, events, and the setting in the text. Readers' interaction with and understanding of the themes of the text are shaped by the language used and its structural arrangement. Halliday (1978) proposed Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as one of the models for analysing the function of grammar. Through the relationship between various constituents of language, SFG offers scholars the opportunity to understanding the workings of language in meaning construction.

The way writers present characters and events as Language use to mean, textual/language structures reveal the way authors construe reality (Fowler 1986). Writers use language in a way that reflects their experience and ideology. Transitivity is one of the systems that helps in encoding meanings that are often not clear in textual form or in the text. In the grammar of clauses (clause grammar), transitivity is a component of the ideational experiential meta function and therefore also plays a vital role (Halliday, 2013). With respect to reality as Mwinlaaru (2012) argues, transitivity determines the labeling of participants and processes and thus illuminates both reality and perception.

Ideational meaning, or experiential meaning, expresses the relationship between a given language and a certain experience, specifically at the clause level. Figueiredo (1999) defines it simply as "the way meaning is represented in a clause" (p. 100). From the vantage of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) language is viewed as a system of choices (Eggins, 2004). Selection of specific linguistic features is crucial in the construction of meaning. These decisions in meaning making organize discourse while at the same time embody wider social and ideological constructs (Bloor & Bloor, 2013). In the words of Fairclough (2003), language is, "a means of social control, or a means of social and cultural construction," it is a fundamental tool through which social life is constructed.

This study uses Halliday's transitivity theory (1994) as a framework to investigate the language aspects of Ernest Hemingway's The Old Man and The Sea. It explores meaning construction through the linguistic processes employed in the novella. Halliday's transitivity system (1994), which is part of the ideational meta-function, helps analyze the discourse in The Old Man and the Sea and how language captures the actions and events within the work. The novella, published in 1952, is known for its enduring themes of resilience, struggle, and human dignity. This study illustrates the intricate relationship between linguistic features and characterization, themes, and how language encapsulates internal thoughts and external actions (Brill & Yinjuan, 2024).

Transitivity analysis, as highlighted in prior studies (Halliday, 1971; Montgomery, 1995; Mwinlaaru, 2012; Qasim, 2018), offers a potent means of revealing the meaning within linguistic frameworks in a text. This study aims to

bridge this gap by exploring ideational meaning in the transitivity processes of The Old Man and The Sea, focusing on how language shapes character, authority, and key themes of the novella. Shifting the approach to the functional side of language aids in revealing the relationship between language and meaning in the text.

Statement of the Problem

Language is a primary system for constructing meaning, shaping narratives, and reflecting social realities. In literary works, the utterances of the text transitivity system allow for the representation of actions, relationships, and ideologies. Halliday (1971), Montgomery (1995), Mwinlaaru (2012), Qasim (2018), and others have highlighted the importance of transitivity in meaning construction. However, there is no known study on the functions of language in The Old Man and The Sea. There is very little analysis of the language suffused with the characters' internal and external experiences during the old man's and the sea's sparse but powerful dialogues and descriptive passages, which is surprising given Hemingway's vivid yet minimalist literary style. A study conducted on the strategies and linguistic techniques utilized in Hemingway's works could elicit much stronger inferences if conducted with this approach. In the novella, he confronts the reader with his perception of the characters' and the narrator's worlds, and this study investigates Halliday's (1994) transitivity framework and The Old Man and The Sea to analyze the narrative representation of actions, emotions, and ideologies. This is the main objective of the study: to analyze the ideational meaning via the transitivity processes in The Old Man and The Sea and illustrate the use of language in the construction of character development, its power relations and themes. With this emphasis, the research adds value to the understanding of the language and meaning nexus in the particular text studied to the literary text's language.

Research Questions

- What transitivity processes can be identified in *The Old Man and the Sea,* by Ernest Hemingway?

- How do these transitivity processes contribute to the construction of characterization through language in *The Old Man and the Sea*?

Research Objectives

- To identify transitivity processes in *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest

Hemingway.

- To explore the transitivity processes, contribute to the construction of characterization through language in *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Significance of the Study

Language interpretation functions as a social phenomenon, while transitivity analysis helps to systematically comprehend the experiential aspects of meaning within texts (Ammara et al., 2019). Here, we employ Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) to analyze Ernest Hemmingway's The Old Man and the Sea, one of American literature's cornerstones, offering a fresh contribution to the field of linguistics. As the study aligns with Matthiessen & Halliday's (1989) assertion that language functions as a social semiotic and reveals meaning, we explore how Hemingway's linguistic choices reveal the construction and development of the characters. The study also seeks to describe the linguistic mechanisms encoding a particular worldview and thematic concern of the author (Halliday, 1978). The findings provide fresh, empirical perspectives on Hemingway's narrative technique and the relation of linguistic structure to the construction of meaning within discourse, thereby enriching the field of linguistics. The research also informs pedagogy as it illustrates how SFG informs teaching plans aimed at fostering students' critical and appreciative reading and analysis of texts. This study advances applied linguistics aimed at exploring the construction of meaning in language and the contribution to the development of characterization.

Literature Review

This literature review explores the use of transitivity analysis within the scope of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) concerning its application to literary works and the paucity of scholarship on Ernest Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea. The transitivity analysis by Halliday has received considerable attention as a means to study the impact of language on a narrative's structure, relational dynamics, and overarching themes in a literary work.

Considerable scholarship has analyzed literary works using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and particularly the transitivity framework, with a focus on characterization, theme construction, and ideology. To cite an example, Yousif and Bulaila (2023) analyzed D. H. Lawrence's The Rocking-Horse Winner

using SFL and applied process-type evaluation to the narrative, finding pronounced correspondence of the linguistic results and psychological interpretation within the mother-son dyad. In the same vein, Azar (2012) applied the transitivity model to study the mind-style of the protagonist in Joyce's Clay, arguing that the character's linguistic features underscored his well-mannered nature and symbolic importance. Luckin (2013) studied Mark Haddon's The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time and defended the idea that the transitivity patterns convey the protagonist's distinctive cognitive and perceptual traits.

Transitivity analysis has been useful in the study of gender and the social relations of power. Gallardo (2006), in her analysis of language and gender in Shaw's Pygmalion, observed that male characters are rational and dominant, whereas females are emotional and passive. Thus, she shows how language can be used to construct social realities. Cunanan (2011) showed how transitivity analysis can be used to teach literature, especially in relation to the psychology of the characters, the author's viewpoint, and in stream-of-consciousness writing. Nguyen (2012) has also demonstrated the impact of transitivity focusing on linguistic choices in character portrayal and the construction of roles in Hoe Pham's "Heroic Mother" and how it helps the reader to understand the narrative better.

There have been several studies that focus on character analysis using transitivity. Mehmood et al. (2014) studied Oscar Wilde's The Nightingale and the Rose and noted that material processes featured most of the character's actions while verbal and social processes explicated the contexts and reaffirmed the construction of the external world. Along similar lines, Hassan et al. (2015) and Nurhayati (2018) also demonstrated how transitivity analysis can be used to capture character traits and build characterization with a notable dominance of material processes. Ahmad (2019) and Nugraha and Mahdi (2020) exhibited diverse character processes, showcasing the cross-genre flexibility of the framework.

The application of transitivity analysis has been broadened to include thematic studies. Song (2013) analyzed Faulkner's A Rose for Emily, claiming the transitivity processes used in the text illustrate the enduring theme of defiance to nostalgia. Along with Halima (2019), Nisrina, and Nasrudinilah (2021), EK (2012), and Bibi et al (2023) applied the same framework to interpret themes, ideational meanings, and

make linguistic choices in literary works, linking them to broader constructs of ideology, gender, power, and social norms. Ezz-Eddin (2024) and Harahap et al. (2024) applied transitivity analysis to disentangle complex emotions, social insights, and narrative construction.

The framework has also been applied to children's literature. Faizin et al. (2022) studied the fairy tales of Joseph Jacobs and highlighted the previously overlooked stylistic aspects of the children's literature's language, particularly the prevalence of material processes in the actions of protagonists.

Emodi (2022) studied proverbs and transitivity in Achebe's A Man of the People from the cultural and ideological perspectives because he was interested in how a given thematic concern and cultural meaning are woven in a given process type, participant, and circumstance. In a more recent work, Naeem and Zaidi (2024) analyzed Kincaid's Girl and demonstrated how a woman's role in a postcolonial society is shaped through the use of language and other poststructural elements. Sana et al. (2024) and Butt (2021) transitivity in the construction of reality with regard to character, action, and socio-economics along with Marxist and classist ideas. Larbaoui and Guerroudj (2021) and Jesudas (2025) broadend the scope with their studies on meaning construction, social context, and the authorial stance of the text through the use of language.

The application of transitivity analysis has spanned various literary texts, from children's literature to texts from diverse cultures. However, it is striking that Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea has been overlooked. To the best of my knowledge, no methodical study employing SFG transitivity analysis has been conducted to examine the relations between Hemingway's linguistic choices and the character, action, and theme of the novella, which has been often discussed through psychological, symbolic, and thematic lenses. This is all the more regrettable considering the significance of Hemingway's sparse yet deeply thematic writing. As noted by Yousif and Bulaila (2023), Mehmood et al. (2014), Butt (2021), and Larbaoui & Guerroudj (2021), there is remarkable potential in transitivity analysis to uncover… gender relationships and social hierarchies alongside prevailing cultural ideologies. However, very little has been done to address the integration of this framework into the distinctive narrative techniques and ideational meanings of

Hemingway's works.

Consequently, this study seeks to fill this gap by conducting transitivity analysis on The Old Man and the Sea, aiming to uncover the ways Hemingway's prose encodes the experiences, relationships, and worldviews of the protagonist. In this manner, it attempts to broaden the scope of the SFG (Systemic Functional Grammar) model with the literary works of American authors and contributes towards deepening the minimalist interpretation of Hemingway with regard to the structural frameworks and meaning systems of language in his prose.

Research Methodology

In this section, the author provides a qualitative assessment of the objectives and analyzes the excerpts from the novella text. *The Old Man and the Sea* provides the primary data for this study, which was collected through purposive sampling. The primary focus of the data analysis is the identification and classification of the six processes to study how they affect the development of the characterization. The systematic analysis of language aims to reveal the ways in which the author's language influences the narrative and the intended meaning.

Research Design

The research adopts a qualitative approach to analyze the selected novella based on the objectives of the study. This is because it is possible to assess the extent to which the linguistic structures of transitivity processes contribute to characterization and the narrative structure. This qualitative approach sheds light on the text's meaning to reveal how Hemingway's narrative techniques are crafted.

Textual Data

The primary data for this study is the text of the chosen novella. This novella was selected because of its rich thematic elements and acclaim, thus serves as a text of importance for transitivity evaluation. The novella is analyzed for the use of transitivity processes, giving attention to both substantive and negligible occurrences. The secondary data for this research comes from relevant scholarly articles, official reports, and previously collected datasets aligned with the aims of this research.

Sampling

In current study, a purposive sample is employed. This strategy is effective since it focuses on a single case without having to rely on random sampling (Creswell, 2014).

Here, the focus is on the prose text The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway, which promises rich data for the transitivity analysis. The text in question is not only a literary masterpiece, but also provides sufficient data to explore the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions of language, which are core to SFG (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). This approach ensures the research is not only relevant, but also maximally informative from a theoretical perspective. The examined data is framed in terms of Halliday's (1994) transitivity processes as an exploration of how actions, thoughts, relations, and states are ascribed meaning through language, to analyze how meaning is organized linguistically. This is a close reading of the materials which tries to capture recurring linguistic and broader contextual patterns. This analysis focuses on six processes: material for describing bodily actions and events; mental for perceptions, thinking and emotions; relational for identities, attributes and states of being; behavioral for actions that are partly mental and partly physical; verbal for actions of saying, commanding or questioning something; existential for saying something exists or occurs. Each process is analyzed in its textual context to examine its contribution to the behavior and development of the characters, and the structure of the overall narrative. The findings are integrated with the research questions in such a manner as to illustrate the Halliday's insights and how a framework-based analysis deepens understanding of the meaning of the text.

Analysis and Discussion

Analysis of Transitivity Processes

Using Systemic Functional Grammar, this part focuses on the transitivity processes of The Old Man and The Sea. It identifies and explains the major processes material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential found in the novella. The analysis shows the interconnections among the processes and the characters, literary themes, and the narrative arc, thus revealing more of the linguistic impact of the author's decisions and how those decisions shaped the story.

Material Process

 In Halliday's (1978) Transitivity Processes, the Material Process classifies actions or events as activities of a more physical nature. These processes usually denote "doing" or "happening" and are made up of two components: an Actor (the doer) and a Goal (the entity impacted by the action). The Old Man and the Sea features the following

Material Processes:

EXCERPT- 1

"He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream,"

Actor/Agent	Process Type	Goal	Circumstance
He (the old man)	fished (Material)		alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream

In excerpt 1, Halliday's (1978) Transitivity Process analysis describes the verb "fished" as a Material Process because it denotes some action of doing by the character. The character, "He" is the Participant as Actor who does the action. The personal circumstantial context of "alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream" describes the Gulf Stream which as a setting, provides information about the character's context, geographically and personally. The action of fishing alone captures a sense of isolation, which is important in relation to his emotional state and character. It conveys a mix of independence and loneliness, suggesting either a chosen lifestyle or a resigned acceptance of solitude. The phrase "an old man" suggests age which, together with "fishing," evokes wisdom and perhaps fatigue, deepening his character. The Gulf Stream setting combined with the skiff conveys a strong sense of the character's nature which highlights his humble living and deep connection to the world. The configuration of actions and settings the sentence evokes contribute significantly to the character's development and portray him as a man of few words and deep thoughts; quiet strength and seasoned solitude.

EXCERPT-2

"He had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish,"

Actor/Agent	Process Type	Goal	Circumstance
He (the old man)	gone (Material)		eighty-four days now without taking a fish

Halliday's (1978) transitivity analysis points out the material process of "gone" which indicates an action done by "he" (the old man). The material process also indicates some form of time, and it marks sometime in the old man's struggle. The circumstance "eighty-four days now without taking a fish" adds depth to his emotional and physical struggle and enhances his challenge. This transitivity process enhances the old man's character by revealing his unwavering steadfastness and fortitude. The old man's unyielding effort, in the face of persistent failure, reveals his

formidable willpower and unyielding resolve, which are central to his character in the story. Thus the material process contributes to depicting the old man as a quiet endurance hero, whose actions, in his persistent failure, heightens the impact of the old man's potential triumph or defeat.

EXCERPT-3

"In the first forty days a boy had been with him"

Actor/Agent	Process Type	Goal	Circumstance
a boy	had been (Material)		with him

As noted by Halliday (1978), the Transitivity Process, "had been" indicates a prior action or state and, therefore, is indicative of the boy's having been with the other character for a specific period of time. The participant in this case is "a boy" which indicates that the boy is the subject of the action or state and the circumstance "with him" further specifies the boy's connection or association with another person. The association which the boy has with the other character suggests some process given that the boy's involvement in this relationship for a period of forty days suggests some process of trust, dependency, or development. The material process indicates rather softly that the boy's character and the experiences which he has had with the other character will more or less influence his character in the aspects of his relationships with other people and in his development in the course of the story.

EXCERPT- 4

But after forty days without a fish the boy's parents had told him that the old man was now definitely and finally salao.

Actor/Agent	Process Type	Goal	Circumstance
the boy's parents	had told	him (the boy)	after forty days without a fish, that the old man was now definitely and finally salao

In Excerpt 4, the material process 'had told' describes an action where the boy's parents are the Actor and the boy is the Goal. This process assists in the development of the character by underlining an instance of resolution and communication which affects the boy's emotions and his relationship with the old man. The verb 'had told' suggests an authoritative or conclusory communication which derives the old man's

judgment, thus shaping the boy's internal conflict. This is not merely an action done externally. Rather, it is an action that marks an internal shift within the boy that can lead to greater resilience or despair, depending on his response. The boy's development is shaped through the emotional burden of the parents' communication which depicts an idea that he must accept the reality of his situation, which in turn, influences his actions and motivations in the narrative.

EXCERPT- 5

"...the boy had gone at their orders in another boat which caught three good fish the first week."

Actor/Agent	Process Type	Goal	Circumstance
the boy	had gone	-	at their orders, in another boat
another boat	caught	three good fish	the first week

In the context of Halliday's (1978) transitivity framework, analyzing the sentence in the excerpt reveals two predominant material processes concerning the development of the character. To begin, the material process "had gone" where the boy serves as the actor and "at their orders in another boat" as the circumstantial expression reveals the boy's compliance and submission to authoritative command. This suggests that the boy is rather submissive, and serves the potential role of a subordinate to those of greater power. In the second material process "caught" where the actor is "another boat" and the goal is "three good fish," attention pivots to success or the outcome of the boy's action. In this case the success of the boat in capturing fish further character constructs by suggesting that the boy, albeit passive, is a crucial contributor to some productive outcome. This amalgamation of action and compliance also suggests the boy is part of a system whereby his submission is a requisite in achieving certain productive results, thus, shaping his development as a character who is part of subordinate structures and yet an environment of apparent success. Through the transitivity processes where action and interaction with other quiescent forces are provided, the boy's attributes and the wider systemic and individual relations are revealed.

Mental Processes

In Halliday's (1978) model of Transitivity Processes, Mental Processes constitute one

of the six classifications of actions which are utilized to examine the meaning of language. Mental Processes as Halliday defined includes actions of sense, thought, feeling, perception, and desire. They are always composed of a Senser, (the one who feels, thinks, perceives, or desires) and a Phenomenon (what is felt, thought, perceived or desired). Given below is an extraction of all the Mental Processes from the provided text with the type of each categorized as perception, cognition, emotion, desire, etc.

EXCERPT- 1

"It made the boy sad to see the old man come in each day with his skiff empty."

Sensor	Process Type	Phenomenon
the boy	was sad, see	the old man come in each day with his skiff empty

In excerpt 1, applying Halliday's (1978) Transitivity Process Theory, the main process is mental, whereby the reaction process hones in on the boy's emotional response. The Phenomenon Participant, which is the object of the boy's emotional reaction, is the old man's skiff which is empty. The boy's perception of the empty skiff as a sign of the old man's failure or misfortune reveals the boy's sensitivity while the use of sad, a mental construct, ascribes to the boy's feeling of sympathy or sorrow reinforces his feeling as one who is empathetic to the plight of others. The boy is growing increasingly aware of the old man's condition, which, coupled with the old man's daily arrival with the empty skiff, heightens the boy's emotional concern, depicting the old man's condition. Through this process, the daily, monotonous arrival of the skiff day after day builds unidirectional emotional closeness between the boy and the old man despite the absence of any direct interactions. The boy's reaction to the old man's daily rituals, as presented in this particular sentence, demonstrates the boy's sensitivity and compassion, which as the story unfolds, becomes essential to his character development.

EXCERPT- 2

"The old man saw the phosphorescence of the Gulf weed in the water."

Sensor	Process Type	Phenomenon
The old man	saw	the phosphorescence of the Gulf weed in the water

In excerpt 2, the verb 'saw' describes the old man's mental action of seeing the

phosphorescence. Although sight is a mental action, within the scope of Halliday's framework, seeing is a process because it involves the perception of the old man's world. His seeing undergoes an internal process, indicating a mental interface, engagement, or, in this case, cognitive interaction with the surroundings, suggesting the old man's attention and contemplation. Therefore, the old man is the senser and the phosphorescence is the phenomenon which he perceives. In terms of character development, this portrays the old man as a person who is capable of appreciating and marveling at the splendors of nature, which further enriches the man's character as an observant and reflective person.

EXCERPT- 3

"He watched his lines to see them go straight down out of sight into the water."

Sensor	Process Type	Phenomenon
He	watched	his lines to see them go straight down out of sight into the water

In excerpt 3, the mental process is encapsulated with the word "watched," which suggests some form of psychological interaction with reality. This mental process combined with "to see" suggests that the character is not simply a bystander, but is concentrating and processing the mental event. The character's focus "watched" and "to see" suggests more or less awareness and expectation of what is taking place around him. This mental process aids character development by showing the focus and engagement of the character in the moment which may suggest qualities such as patience, deep observing, or a more contemplative demeanor. Watching the lines descend into the water highlights the character's observation, reinforcing the attention he pays to the setting which deepens the portrayal of his internal condition. This action of mental processing broadens the understanding of the character by revealing his thoughts and feelings in relation to his environment, alluding to a holistic sense of purpose or introspection which is vital to shape his character in the story.

EXCERPT- 4

"He saw the red sifting of the plankton in the dark water."

Sensor	Process Type	Phenomenon
He	saw	the red sifting of the plankton in the dark water

Mental processes are defined in excerpt 4 as an experience which involves a subject

sensing something. Here, "he" as the subject visually perceives "the red sifting of the plankton." The verb "saw" marks the perceptual experience, and the portrayal of "the red sifting of the plankton" highlights the sensory detail, conveying the scene's dynamic and almost otherworldly quality. This type of mental process aids in character development, revealing the character's consciousness in relation to their surroundings. The vivid and almost haunting depiction evokes dark waters filled with plankton, suggesting quiet contemplation and hinting at the character's perception of the world in a sustained, perhaps reflective, look at something fleetingly natural. In addition, word choices "red" and "sifting" suggest movement and life, indicating the character witnesses an evolving scene rather than a static object.

EXCERPT- 5

"The boy knew the old man was not angry."

Sensor	Process Type	Phenomenon
The boy	knew	the old man was not angry

In Halliday's (1978) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), mental processes surround thinking, perception, emotions, or desideration, where a Sensor, which is a conscious entity, experiences a given phenomenon. In excerpt 5, the verb "knew" represents the mental process of cognition, the boy being the Sensor and the old man not being angry as the phenomenon. This mental process is crucial to the boy's character development because it shows the boy's internal perception and understanding of the old man's emotions. This process shows considerable emotional and social intuition, suggesting a deep bond and attachment the boy possesses with the old man. The boy's certainty of the old man's feelings demonstrates trust and a kind of intimacy between them, indicating a relationship which surpasses verbal interaction. This mental process, in addition, stands in contrast as a knowledge vis-a-vis an assumption, building the boy's maturity and his insight into people's feelings, which enriches his characterization while reinforcing the central ideas of the novel: human connection and social understanding.

Relational Process

In Halliday's (1978) framework of Transitivity Processes, one of the six methods delineating the meaning construction of a clause is the relational processes. A

relational process delineates the interconnectedness of the state of being of an entity, often providing an attribute, identity or possession. Such processes regularly employ the verbs "be," "have," "seem," or "become." Here follows an analysis of *The Old Man and the Sea* focusing primarily on the relational processes.

EXCERPT- 1

"...he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish."

Relational Process	Attribute	Mode
had gone	eighty-four days now without taking a fish	Attributive

In Halliday's (1978) system of transitivity processes, the relational process of 'had gone' as used in excerpt 1 denotes a particular state which contributes profoundly to a character's development. The relational process in 'had gone' focuses on the subject's current state, which here, points to a situation of unproductiveness in his fishing efforts. The lasting duration of unproductiveness, encapsulated in the phrase 'eighty-four days now without taking a fish,' highlights a core component of the character's experience that illustrates the intensity of his struggle and how emotionally distressing the situation is. This construction conveys the character's loneliness and aggravation, which deepens the understanding of his struggle, by emphasizing the length of time and the complete lack of success. This struggle lessens the character's resilience, determination, and understanding of his situation, portraying a man at odds with himself, which are essential for his growth throughout the story.

EXCERPT- 2

"In the first forty days a boy had been with him."

Relational Process	Attribute	Mode
had been	with him	Identifying

In excerpt 2, Halliday's (1978) Transitivity Process is relational process. This, relational process, serves to define or express connection that exists between the boy and the old man, suggesting a state of being spanning a duration of time. The verb "had been" is a copulative verb that links "a boy" (the subject) to the relational attribute "with him". The relational process in this case is de-emphasizing action in favor of being, which remains the case for the old man and boy's relationship, thereby emphasizing its duration and continuance. This assists in character development in

terms of supporting the two characters emotionally and psychologically. The relationship is foregrounded, with no regard to events that occur outside of it, which further adds to the understanding of their bond. The phrase "with him" reiterates the boy's bodily and possibly emotional closeness to the old man, enhancing their relationship as companionship, supporting the other, or dependency. So, the relational process goes further that what is temporal by character development which allows the reader to determine the type of relationship and emotional bond the two characters' share.

EXCERPT- 3

"His hope and his confidence had never gone."

Relational Process	Attribute	Mode
had never gone	his hope and his confidence	Attributive

In excerpt 3, as a relational process, specifically a possessive one, "had never gone" functions as a linking verb showcasing "his hope and his confidence" as the subject and the emphasized attribute as the predicated attribute. The relational process employed in the excerpt illustrates how the old man's inner essence continues to endure, defying the tangible reality of his circumstances. The sentence conveys that the old man, irrespective of age or experience, steadfastly possesses hope and confidence which do not fluctuate. This aids in character development as the old man emerges as a figure whose sense of self, fortified in hope and confidence, has transcended the erosion of time, reflecting the resilience of his character. The enduring existence of these attributes further depicts him as a man of inner strength and enduring optimism, a quality that is central to his personality and profoundly influences his actions and decisions throughout the narrative.

EXCERPT- 4

"The old man was shivering with the morning cold."

Relational Process	Attribute	Mode
was	shivering with the morning cold	Attributive

In excerpt 4, the relational process "was" acts as a linking verb, joins the subject "the old man" to the attribute "shivering with the morning cold." The verb relating process here outlines the old man's attribute which is a characteristic to a specific relational

process. The old man's simple description, with the use of was, suggests a more complex character development. The verb phrase "shivering with the morning cold" suggests frailty, vulnerability, and the weight of age as it depicts a person externally conditioned. The old man's physical description suggests equates to an emotional representation of discomfort and in some more profound layers, helplessness depicting isolation. The employ of this relational process allows the reader to empathize with the character which enhances the old man's persona development within the narration.

Behavioral Processes

According to Halliday (1978) in his Transitivity System, Behavioral Processes encompass various processes of physiological and psychological actions such as dreaming, laughing, breathing, crying, or watching. These actions normally consist of a Behaver (the actor in the behavior) and may include a Phenomenon (the directed or concerned subject of the behavior). Supplemental assessment of the Behavioral Processes in The Old man and Sea is presented below:

EXCERPT- 1

"He was asleep when the boy looked in the door in the morning."

Behaver	Process Type	Circumstance
He (the old man)	was asleep (sleeping)	when the boy looked in the door in the morning

In excerpt 1, based on Halliday's (1978) analysis, the Transitivity Process Identify is classified as a Behavioral Process, wherein "He" (the old man) functions as the behaver. This indicates the old man as the entity performing the process of sleeping. The process, "was asleep," indicates a process of being rather than acting, which characterizes the old man as a character who is inherently passive and vulnerable. The old man is the unexpressed participant, and the absence of a phenomenon in this clause indicates that the old man is in a sleep state. This state suggests neither the impact of any force or event, which illustrates a purely neutral internal condition. The lack of a phenomenon stresses the old man's passivity, which suggests something deeper such as vulnerability, or isolation. The transitivity analysis illustrates the old man's character is portrayed as predominantly passive, inactive, and, crucially, unresponsive to the environment. The contrast with the boy "looking in the door,"

which is a more dynamic action, emphasizes the old man's state of profound inertia. This contrast helps to illuminate not just the old man's physical inertia in this excerpt, but also deepen understanding of his emotional state, suggesting a more profound introspection in his character exploration.

EXCERPT- 2

"The boy saw the old man's hands and he started to cry."

Behaver	Process Type	Circumstance
The boy	started to cry (crying)	(none explicitly stated)

In excerpt two of Halliday's (1978) Transitivity Process framework, "The boy" as subject behaves as a Behaver, undergoes the action as a participant, and "started to cry" indicates a material process of doing. This action indeed marks a substantial emotional reaction from the boy. The action of crying suggests the emotional or psychological change of the character. The boy's emotional reaction seems to be internally triggered, perhaps from the sight of the old man's hands, given the lack of a clear Phenomenon and external object or event. This process conveys tears as reflex and expression of the boy's emotional state, in turn, deepens and develops his character, suggesting heightened vulnerability and a possible shift in perspective or realization. The shift signifies a turning point and indicates potential themes of empathy, loss, or connection. It encapsulates and marks the boy's emotional depth. The simple act of crying transforms into an expression reinforcing his emotional development and change or growth in his character.

EXCERPT- 3

"The old man was dreaming about the lions."

Behaver	Process Type	Circumstance
The old man	was dreaming (dreaming)	about the lions

In excerpt 3 Behavioral Process, the "Behaver," who executes the process, is "the old man." This defines the subject as someone who is advanced in age and may be experienced. "Process" as the verb "was dreaming" suggests an activity of an internal calisthenics which is of the old man's deep and reflective, highlighting his inner thought, possibly nostalgia, aged yearning, and unfulfilled contemplation. "Phenomenon" or the object of the process is "about the lions," which provides the

aged subject matter and meaning and also details memories of his life for the subject matter. As for the lions, they may as a phenomenon symbolize the strength and freedom of life and dreams, untamed and yearning unresolved conflicts, or some form of a longing which the old man is portrayed as having. This is how the transitivity structure provides us the reason for the old man's reflectiveness which in turn serves to deepen and complex the character by showing that the old man is silently debate with his past or unfulfilled desires.

EXCERPT- 4

"The boy was sitting by him watching him."

Behaver	Process Type	Phenomenon
The boy	was sitting (sitting)	(none explicitly stated)
The boy	was watching (watching)	him (the old man)

Behavioral Process in excerpt 4 illustrates the dynamics interplay coparticipant roles and processes that bring about character development. In this scenario the boy as behaver (the behaver) is in the process of watching (the process). This watching suggests the boy's interaction, in this case, engagement with the old man (the phenomenon). The boy's watching acts suggests some level of engagement with the elderly man, which may be focused curiosity, attending, or some level of thinking. The sentence illustrates the boy as an observer and the old man as the observed which hints some dynamics of their relationship. The boy's sitting, described as watching passively, is juxtaposed to the watching which is an active process. This illustrates a stark contrast that hints at some difference in power, authority, and/or experience of the two characters, thereby revealing further aspects of their cognitive and emotional states as well as the relationship interplay. The process of watching the old man not only is a boy's action but also allows the reader to grasp the boy's emotional or cognitive engagement with the old man which acts towards the development of the characters in the narrative.

EXCERPT- 5

"The old man took it and drank it."

Behaver	Process Type	Phenomenon
The old man	took (taking)	it (the coffee)

Behaver	Process Type	Phenomenon
The old man	drank (drinking)	it (the coffee)

Excerpt 5 demonstrates some of the elements contributing to character development. The "Behaver" in this instance is "the old man," who is the participant doing the action. His identification as the Behaver helps establish him as an active character in the old man's story, focusing the reader on the character's deeds, actions, and indeed, his personality or state of being. The "Process" here is material and is represented by the verb "drank." "Drank" is an action taken by the Behaver that is a material process. This action, drinking, suggests a need, a habit, or a preference of the old man hinting some aspects of his character. The "Phenomenon" in this case "it" (the coffee) serves as the participant who undergoes the action. The selection of "coffee" suggests something about the old man, his possible daily routines, temperament and his desire for comfort or warmth. Through this simple transitive structure, the sentence is able to present the old man as more than a passive figure, for he is a man of agency who interacts with the environment in ways which helps his characterization.

Majority of *The Old Man and The Sea* are dominated with the following behavioral processes: to sleep, to dream, to cry, to watch and to breathe. The old man and the boy's emotions and tiredness are intricately linked and, therefore, both the old man and the boy are undergoing a gradual psychological and physiological transformation. Behaver is regularly exemplified by the old man or the boy, while Phenomenon is frequently implied or clearly described, like the old man's lion dreams or the boy's gaze at the old man.

Verbal Process

In Halliday's (1978) Transitivity Processes, the Verbal Process deals with the saying, the communicating, or the expressing. These processes are composed of a Sayer (the speaking participant), a Receiver (the message's addressee), and the Verbiage (what is said, the message content). Here are the cases of Verbal Processes which I have copied from the text you sent to me:

EXCERPT- 1

"Santiago," the boy said to him as they climbed the bank from where the skiff was hauled up. "I could go with you again. We've made some money."

Sayer	Receiver	Verbiage
the boy	Santiago	"I could go with you again. We've made some money."

In excerpt 1, The Verbal Process, the boy, as the Sayer, is performing the action of saying to Santiago, the Receiver. The Verbiage captures the boy's reasoning. This process is significant for further character analysis as it demonstrates the boy's character progression in relation to Santiago. The boy's words indicate some level of growing independence coupled with increasing responsibility, demonstrated by his willingness to 'go with' Santiago 'once more'. The phrase 'made some money' suggests some level of development or achievement, however, it also points to shared attainment which is an indicator of the boy's growing maturity in the context of their partnership. This section captures one of the many exchanges the characters have, an intense relationship is evidenced by the boy's words suggesting a willingness to aid Santiago in his endeavors, thus playing the dual role of a companion and apprentice. An analysis of the boy's character development using Halliday's taxonomy demonstrates the gradual change in his relationship with Santiago, shifting from a subordinate role to a more active balanced role.

EXCERPT- 2

"No," the old man said. "You're with a lucky boat. Stay with them."

Sayer	Receiver	Verbiage
the old man	the boy	"You're with a lucky boat. Stay with them."

In excerpt 2, the verbal Process exposed the interpersonal relations that the characters have, which leads us to further develop the old man's character. The old man, as the Sayer, speaks to the boy, the Receiver, using speech acts that are framed as declarative statements meant to either comfort or instruct. The Verbiage, "You're with a lucky boat. Stay with them," communicates the idea that the boy is in good hands and should indeed stay put. The old man's dialogue is simple, but within the material process of "stay," he is portraying himself as a wise and helpful figure who is making the boy's decisions in his best interest. Although the old man's expressions are simplistic, they are filled with authority and experience, suggesting that he is a mentor or guardian. The exchange as analyzed through the lens of transitivity further supports the claim that the old man's interaction with the boy is that of nurture, concern, and

guidance, molding the boy's character while shaping the old man's character as a pivotal influence in the tale.

EXCERPT- 3

"But remember how you went eighty-seven days without fish and then we caught big ones every day for three weeks."

Sayer	Receiver	Verbiage
the boy	the old man	"But remember how you went eighty-seven days without fish and then we caught big ones every day for three weeks."

In the third excerpt, as Halliday's (1978) The Sayer 'Verbal process The Sayer' explains, the boy who speaks first, The Sayer, initiates the speech act with direction to the action toward the Receiver, the old man. The old man's cognitive engagement in remembering a past experience with scarcity and success is invoked by the boy's verbal action, "Sayer" verbal action in remembering. The boy talks about scarcity of fish and mentions the passage of time, speaks of endurance, and contrasts with subsequent success, "we caught big ones every day for three weeks." The structure captures and highlights the boy's understanding of their journey and emphasizes his development from being a passive observer to an active participant in the fishing endeavor. The exchange serves to aid the old man's reflection while showcasing the boy's maturation. Through this, the boy strengthens the bond with the man.

EXCERPT- 4

"I remember," the old man said. "I know you did not leave me because you doubted."

Sayer	Receiver	Verbiage
the old man	the boy	"I remember. I know you did not leave me because you doubted."

In excerpt 4, the roles of Sayer and Receiver are allocated to the old man and the boy, respectively, with their dialogue serving as the Verbiage. The old man's knowing looks indicate some engagement with "I remember" and "I know" as activities in his reminiscence which speak to his contemplation. This selection of process reveals not only the old man's wisdom as a character, but also shows his emotional attachment to the boy. While seeking some verifiable confirmation about the boy, his intentions, and

his actions, the old man's utterances reveal his vulnerability and deep care. Moreover, his verbalized memory deepens his portrayal as one who is emotionally anchored and ponders and is concerned about the dynamics of his relationship with the boy. When he says, "the boy did not leave, not because he doubted" shows some level of trust and emotional depth, which reveals and illuminates a character ready to be understood as opposed to judged. Therefore, this transitivity process is key to the old man's character in this excerpt as he is reflective and emotionally aware.

EXCERPT- 5

"It was papa made me leave. I am a boy and I must obey him."

Sayer	Receiver	Verbiage
the boy	the old man	"It was papa made me leave. I am a boy and I must obey him."

In excerpt 5, during the verbal process, the boy as the Sayer is located in the subject position of the clause, reflecting his obedience sociologically internalized. The old man serves as the Receiver, the person who is the object of the boy's verbalization but is not an active participant in the speaking process. The verb "made" is a causative material process informing us of something that is 'made' in terms of the boy's actions of 'leaving' which in this case, is an effect of his father's authoritative command. The clause "I am a boy and I must obey him" supports the notion that the boy is indeed passive, socially conditioned, and devoid of active agency. The boy's socio-psychological internal conflict, or a sense of duty that defines his character, is also a hallmark of his subservience. By emphasizing the command that structures the boy's obedience which is the family order, this serves to illustrate subjugation to parental, or family order. Thus, character development within the text relies on the persistent, and this case, persistent inner struggle, conflict. Furthermore, his feelings of wanting to detach from the "power" from which he is bound, struggle to gain independence sideways. Using this Transitivity Process, through the boy's identification and relationship, Halliday demonstrates the boy's socio-psychological development shaped through his father's presence in his life, defining obedience, duty, family, and hierarchical social structures.

Existential Process

In Halliday's (1978) Transitivity Processes, Existential processes are used to represent that something exists or happens. These processes typically involve the verb "to be"

or other existential verbs like "exist," "arise," or "occur." They often introduce a participant (the "Existent") that is being said to exist or occur. Below are the Existential processes in the provided text from *The Old Man and the Sea*:

EXCERPT- 1

"He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream..."

Existent	Process Type	Circumstance
an old man	was (existential)	who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream

it gives us an insight into the old man's character and his attitude towards life through Halliday's (1978) transitivity processes. The old man's role in the narrative is introduced through the existential process "was." This construction is important to character development as it portrays the old man as a passive character who only 'is' instead of active in the world. The old man's identity is further underscored by the clause "who fished alone" illustrating self-sufficiency. The transitivity process here illustrates the depth of the old man's character by placing him in his environment (the Gulf Stream, his skiff) and portraying his connection to the natural world in contrast to his aloneness. Halliday's transitivity process, through the narrative and within the grammatical structures, communicates his life to the reader, paving the way to deepen his character in the storyline.

EXCERPT- 2

"In the first forty days a boy had been with him."

Existent	Process Type	Circumstance
a boy	had been (existential)	with him during the first forty days

In excerpt 2, Halliday's (1978) Transitivity Process of Existent is significant because it frames the narrative around the boy's being and his relation to the old man. The verb "had been" reflects an existential process, and it indicates that the boy's presence is an abiding state. A process of existence here is chosen instead of doing because it provides a low-key glimpse of the boy's presence without drawing attention to his actions which is more important later. The existential process, to some extent, enriches characterization in the narrative in that it frames the boy's relationship with the old man as a significant bond. Even without specifying the quantity and quality of their interactions, it implies that the boy is significant in the old man's life and

experiences. Through this process, the narrative allows the audience to appreciate the boy's presence as a basic part of the old man's life and daily routine, which makes the relationship evolve subsequently.

EXCERPT- 3

"There was yellow weed on the line but the old man knew that only made an added drag..."

Existent	Process Type	Circumstance
yellow weed on the line	was (existential)	on the line, adding drag

Excerpt three exemplifies an existential process. The existential marker, "was," indicates the yellow weed's presence on "the line." This process further delineates the old man's spatial setting and, revealing his position with respect to the setting, adds to character development. The yellow weed's presence, however trivial, introduces an element which, along with the the man's age, signals old age and decay, and disease, which the old man is struggling with. The old man's "knowing" about the weed suggests his knowledge and experience as well as his mental state, which is an attentive understanding of the world around him. Using this simple existential process, one can position the old man as a character who is not simply immersed in the world but is quietly and attentively aware of the various elements of nature. This detail adds to the old man's character as an ageing individual who, no matter his age, is deeply engaged with his environment.

EXCERPT- 4

"In the first forty days a boy had been with him."

Existent	Process Type	Circumstance
a boy	had been (existential)	with him during the first forty days

Halliday (1978) describes transitivity processes and we can take from them the existential process which revolves around the existence of the subject instead of any activity done. In this case, the boy functions as the Existent, signifying his existence in the narrative. "Had been" acts as the existential verb which centers the boy's existence in relationship to the old man, emphasizing the boy's existence in the old man's life. This expression functions as an existential verb, showing the boy's existence in the old man's life, while simultaneously hinting at the old man's life over

time. The narrative conveys the boy as the old man's significant companion at a specific time in the past. The old man's life is depicted as having the boy's presence which marks the beginning of a transformative relationship and narrative. Halliday's framework of existential processes illustrates how minimal linguistic features can initiate meaningful shifts in character development.

EXCERPT- 5

"There is no pot of yellow rice and fish and the boy knew this too."

Existent	Process Type	Circumstance
no pot of yellow rice and fish	is (existential)	(current absence)

The Transitivity Process renders clear the interrelation of the elements of the sentence and how they contribute to the development of the character. The existential process, illustrated with the verb "is", marks the state of being or existence; however, here it marks the absence of something essential, the "pot of yellow rice and fish." This lack serves as a detail that is important toward the context of the situation and produces a sense of deprivation. The boy's acknowledgment of absence, "the boy knew this too," suggests that somehow, his consciousness is in sync with the reality of the moment. His knowledge of lack suggests that he is somehow anchored to the reality of his immediate environment which could point to his emotional state or character development. This building process of the boy's character, by describing what is not there, suggests the existence of a turning point, a challenge or absence of something essential, which may be a significant turning point to his existence. It can therefore be concluded that the balance of Halliday's transitivity analysis to focus on the absence and the boy's development contributes to his awareness of the void in existence, both materially and emotionally.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine the transitivity processes in The Old Man and the Sea within the context of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). The analysis reveals that Hemingway's text is abundant in the following processes: material, mental, relational, behavior, verbal, and existential, which serve to build the characters, develop the themes, and move the plot forward. These findings align with and build upon prior studies on literary discourse and transitivity. The analysis indicates that material processes are dominant in the novella and are indicative of the

actions and the intense conflicts that the characters, specifically Santiago, undergo. This supports Simpson's (2004) claim that material processes in literary works often highlight the characters' actions and struggles. In The Old Man and the Sea, the expressions "fished," "gone," and "caught" surface are emblematic of much more than Santiago's everyday activities. They are a testament of enduring spirit and unwavering fortitude. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) did emphasize that the bulk of "doing" and "happening" is captured in material processes. This holds true in the case of the novella, where such processes accentuate Santiago's struggles and the intense physicality of his determination to contend with nature.

The mental frameworks in the novella, particularly, "knew," "thought," "wished," and "dreamed" reveal something about the cognitive states of both Santiago and the boy. They show the characters' feelings, perceptions, and wants, which enhances their psychology. This claim is supported by Hasan (1989) who pointed out the importance of mental processes in fiction for building character subjectivity and inviting the readers into the character's private life. Because of the heavy reliance on mental processes in Hemingway's narratives, readers are able to connect with and appreciate the characters as well as the existential motifs of hope, despair, and longing. The processes of "was," "had been," and "had never gone" are examples of how, Santiago and the boy's identities and their differences are as well established. This blend is most important for the identities of Santiago and the boy. As Eggins (2004) points out, relational processes in literary works often revolve around character development with regards to social standing and class. The relational clauses in the novella highlight Santiago's endurance and the boy's loyalty, as well as the changing patterns of their companionship which reinforces the themes of companionship and isolation.

Behavioral processes such as "was asleep," "was dreaming," and "started to cry," capture the mental and emotional conditions of the characters. This supports the work of Halliday (1978) as he pointed out that behavioral processes are often the bridge between a material and mental activity and are sometimes a response to a character's feelings and physical sensations. On the other hand, existential processes focus on the absence or presence of entities and conditions such as, "There is no pot of yellow rice and fish," or, "There was yellow weed on the line." These processes

have been pointed out by Simpson (2004) to be important in capturing the mood and setting, claiming that existential clauses in literature often foreground existential concerns as well as thematic concerns and the character's existence concerning their surroundings.

DDL has been used to analyze the verbs used in conversations in "said," "told," and "remember." These are verbs that capture verbal processes. It is noted that with each of the verbs used, an element of dialogue and an element of a relationship are exchanged. Toolan (1998) brought to our understanding the role verbal processes play in understanding the relationship between people and the emotional atmosphere. It has been noted verbal processes partake in the communication, but they have much more impact as highlighted in the analysis of the novella; they demonstrate the emotional atmosphere, power relations, and the development of the characters. As verbal processes build the relationship between the different participants they also build the narrative as Toolan highlighted.

The outcomes of this study reinforce the conclusions of earlier investigations concerning transitivity within the context of literary discourse. To illustrate, Wang (2010) demonstrated that Hemingway's use of transitivity processes in The Old Man and the Sea serves to construct the protagonist's character and propel the plot forward. As Li (2014) remarked, the interplay of material and mental processes in the novella depicts the character's existential struggles and complex psychology. This study further builds these conclusions by exploring how every single type of process contributes to character development and construction of the themes.

Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to examine the transitivity processes in The Old Man and the Sea applying Halliday's (1978) Systemic Functional Grammar with the emphasis on material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential processes and how they aid in the shaping of the characters, themes, and plot structure of the narrative. The analysis shows that Hemingway's linguistic choices do have a functional reason; they have been made, in detail, to capture the psyche, fortitude, and the changing dynamics of the characters and, specifically, of Santiago and the boy. Endurance, isolation, and the struggle to endure are highlighted in the material processes. The mental processes reveal the inner worlds of the characters and their

hopes, fears, and emotional ties. Relational processes define states of being and relations which encompass the definition of an identity, a companion, and the motion of time. The gap between action and thought is bridged in the behavioral processes which describe the bodily and mental reactions of the characters to their surroundings. The verbal processes explain the relations of the characters with regard to the articulation of commands, feelings, and other constituents of the presence of authority. The existential processes delineate the states of being and the ideas of being and nothingness which characterize the life of the characters.

As a result of this thorough transitivity analysis, Hemingway's narrative emerges more vividly, given the interaction of these processes, especially in how they guide the reader's understanding of the characters and the more universal ideas of existence in relation to the novella. The investigation reveals that systemic functional grammar reveals the profound influence that language wields in creating meaning, identity, and emotive impact in literature. This analysis broadens our understanding of *The Old Man and the Sea* while at the same time highlighting the importance of linguistic methods within literary critique.

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