

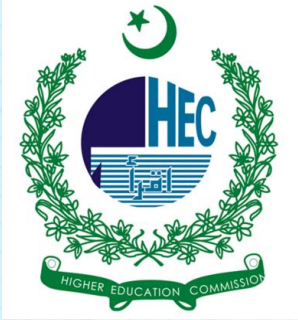
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**Transitivity Analysis of the Poem 'the Flower is Torn at the Heart' By Noshi Gilani: A Hallidayan Approach**



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**Abstract**

This study aims to find material, verbal, mental, behavioral, relational and existential processes in the perspective of transitivity framework (A Hallidayan Approach) in Noshi Gilani's poem 'The Flower is Torn at the Heart'. With that, the researcher aims to explore how the types of processes contribute to the construction of thematic elements in the poem. A qualitative descriptive methodology has been used for answering the research questions. The findings and description of the study reveal that various types of processes have been found in the poem. These processes in the poem are material such as 'torn' in verse 1, 'destroyed' in verse 3 'spent' and 'go' in verses 4 and 5; verbal processes such as 'tell' in verse 3; mental processes such as 'want' in verse 6, 'wavers' in verse 10, 'honour' in verse 11, 'gripped' and 'desire' in verses 12 and 13; relational process such as 'befriends' and 'make' in verses 2 and 14; behavioral processes such as 'is asleep', and 'stay awake' in verses 7 and 8. No existential process has been found in the poem. Moreover, these processes in the poem construct various themes such as themes of disloyalty, friendship, punishment, and desires. The findings of the study are useful for future researchers, readers and writers in terms of building and extracting themes through the use of transitivity on different genres of literature in various languages.

**Key Words:** Transitivity, A Hallidayan Approach, Thematic Elements,

Qualitative, Processes

## **Introduction**

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) conceptualizes language and its grammar as tools for creating meaning. Additionally, it posits a close interconnection between linguistic form and meaning (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). Halliday (1975) proposes that language evolves in response to three distinct social functions. Later, Halliday (1978) termed these functions 'meta-functions,' specifically identifying them as ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Halliday (2014) noted that these three meta-functions operate concurrently in language. The ideational meta-function interprets experiences, both internal and external, by describing what happens around and within us. This function also encompasses the system of transitivity.

Halliday (1981) described transitivity as a method of clause analysis that conveys particular types of ideational meanings. The primary role of the clause is to represent experiences, detailing events and states of both the inner and outer worlds as perceived by individuals. Transitivity comprises three elements: the process, participants, and circumstances. This approach deeply explains how writers convey complex emotions and themes through their linguistic choices. A text often carries meaning and in the same way, a poem is not without meaning which expresses different concepts indirectly. A direct meaning is carried by a text, usually termed the denotation or the referential meaning. Whereas, an indirect meaning is conveyed in

poetry or a poem, often termed symbolic or connotational meanings (Aziza, 2023).

The meanings of a poem are not directly known by the readers, therefore, it needs interpretation by using different lenses and approaches. For exploring the thematic elements in the poem 'The Flower is Torn at the Heart' by Noshi Gilani, transitivity as a framework (A Hallidayan Approach) is used. Noshi Gilani was born on 14th March 1964 in Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Even though she is a Pakistani poet, her fame is recognized internationally. Being a former faculty member of Bahawalpur University, her success can be observed through her five successful publications of poetry collections. Her poems, along with '*The Flower is Torn at the Heart*' were translated into English in 2008 during the Second World Poets' tour. Although Gillani was unable to attend the tour in person, nonetheless her poems were featured and introduced to the English audiences of the United Kingdom. Her international fame is mainly because of the translation of her poems into English without which she would have been unknown outside Pakistan.

Noshi Gilani's poem '*The Flower Is Torn at the Heart*' poignantly employs the image of a fragile flower to illustrate profound emotional pain and suffering. The title alone suggests significant distress, which indicates something inherently beautiful and delicate has been harmed. By using the metaphor of a damaged flower, Gilani explores themes of heartache and vulnerability, with the flower symbolizing human

susceptibility and the enduring impact of life's adversities. Thus, the poem encapsulates the duality of human experience, where beauty and pain intersect, and resilience is forged from suffering, with the flower symbolizing both fragility and strength.

### **Literature Review**

SFL is viewed as a resource for meaning-making and a system of interlaced meaningful choices in language. It is considered an important and prominent medium of meaning-making. The transitivity theory is considered a foundation of semantic initiation of experience in which the speaker particularly inscribes his experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). However, it is the most substantial theory by Halliday that prescribed language as an experience of speakers. By applying the transitivity approach, Bashir (2023) aimed to discover the types of processes in Maya Angelou's poems '*Still I Rise*' and '*Phenomenal Woman*'. The researcher aims to analyze through the different types of processes of transitivity how women are suppressed in a male-dominated society. The results of the study reveal that five types of processes have been used in both poems. With that, it has been found that material processes were the most dominant processes used in both poems. Moreover, this system of transitivity found the speaker's struggles against the conventional rules that were used for oppressing women in America.

Sultan (2023) conducted a study to examine the narrative and psychological development of the major character in '*Home They*

*Brought Her Warrior Dead'*, using Halliday's transitivity theory as a methodological approach. The widow, in the first two stanzas, does not show any movement, whereas, movement and action become the focus in the third and fourth stanzas of the poem. The results provide an objective and analytical instrument for exploring the meanings of the text of the poem by using Halliday's transitivity system. The purpose of Haroon's (2021) study was to investigate the transitivity analysis of the poem 'The Old Building' by Imdad Hussein. This study examines the correlation between linguistic structures and semantic interpretation within the poem, employing the transitivity approach by (Halliday 1995).

Through transitivity analysis of the poem, it has been found that material process is frequently used, which represents a person's inner hollowness and devastation. For this situation, the old building has been used in the poem by the poet. In the poem, existential, relational and mental processes have also been found which convey different meanings. Choudhry and Chaudhary (2020) conducted a study on the transitivity analysis of Disney's Zootopia. The objective of this study was to explore the clauses through a transitivity system. Furthermore, the researchers aim to investigate types of processes with their percentage in the dialogues of the story. The findings of the study reveal that the percentage of material processes with 54%, and relational and mental processes with 15% have occurred in the text of the story. The findings of the study suggest that the transitivity

approach may be applied to other genres of literature such as drama, and poetry.

Sihura (2019) held a study on 'The Frozen Movie'. The study aimed to analyze the dialogues in the light of the transitivity system. The findings revealed that in 'Frozen Movie' the material processes were higher in number than other types of processes. Abbas and Talat (2019) analyzed the captions and headlines from different newspapers by applying the Hallidayan Approach of the transitivity system. The finding revealed how both genders are addressed and presented in the language of newspapers. Zuhud and Afrainto (2014) conducted research on 'Donne's and Blake's Poems by applying the transitivity approach to find out the types of processes used in their poems. The study found that mental processes such as '*hear, love, think*' and '*feel,*' have been used in their poems. With that, the result revealed the frequent use of relational processes.

Sultan (2023) utilized the transitivity approach, grounded in Systemic Functional Grammar, to analyze Alfred Tennyson's poem 'Home They Brought Her Warrior Dead.' This study demonstrated that the transitivity approach is effective for identifying and interpreting the strengths and weaknesses of the main character. Transitivity provides an opportunity for analysis across various genres of textual discourse. The objective of this study is to find out the types of processes in the light of transitivity (A Hallidayan Approach) in Noshi Gilani's poem '*The Flower is Torn at the Heart.*' With that, the

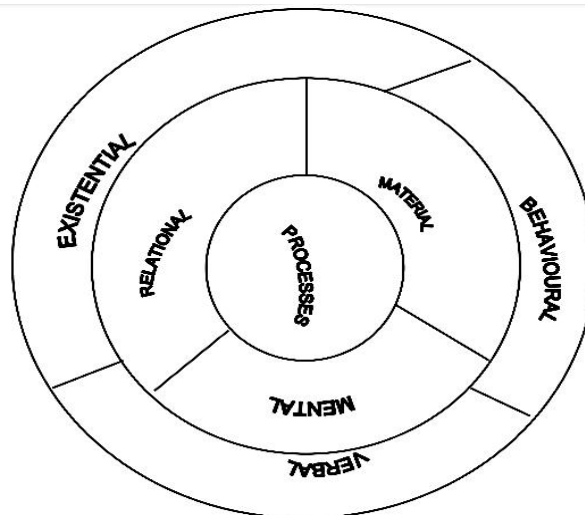
researcher aims to explore how the use of different types of processes of transitivity contributes to the construction of thematic elements in the poem various studies have employed a transitivity approach to analyze creative writing, poems, and short stories. However, there is a notable gap in the literature concerning the application of thematic analysis to poems using this method. Consequently, this research aims not only to identify the transitivity processes in Noshi Gilani's poem but also to conduct a comprehensive thematic analysis. This dual focus will provide a deeper understanding of how language and themes interact in her work.

### **Methodology**

A descriptive qualitative method has been used in this study. According to Arikunto (1993), the focus of the descriptive qualitative approach is to provide a detailed analysis of a phenomenon. The researcher used the Transitivity Approach given by M.K Halliday. The researcher selected the poem 'The Flower is Torn at the Heart' by Noshi Gilani. The poem is a sonnet of 14 verses. Two questions were formulated by the researcher which were answered by applying the transitivity approach. The objective of this study is to find out the types of processes (A Hallidayan Approach) in Noshi Gilani's poem '*The Flower is Torn at the Hear*'. With that, the researcher aims to explore how the types of processes contribute to the construction of thematic elements in the poem. These processes include material, verbal, mental, behavioral, relational and existential processes. This



study aims to address this gap by analyzing and exploring types of processes in the light of transitivity and how various types of



processes contribute to the construction of thematic elements in Noshi Gilani's poem '*The Flower is Torn at the Heart*'. The researcher endeavors to provide valuable insights in terms of the connection between linguistic features and themes in the poem. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no such study has been conducted before on the poem '*The Flower is Torn at the Heart*' by Noshi Gilani'.

### **Objectives:**

- To find out the types of processes in Noshi Gilani's poem '*The Flower is Torn at the Heart*'.
- To analyze the contribution to the construction of thematic elements in Noshi Gilani's poem '*The Flower is Torn at The Heart*'?

### **Research Questions**

1. What type of processes are used in Noshi Gilani's poem '*The Flower is Torn at the Heart*'?
2. How does the use of transitivity contribute to the construction of thematic elements in Noshi Gilani's poem '*The Flower is Torn at The Heart*'?

### **Concept of Transitivity**

In the 20th Century, the theory of Transitivity was introduced by Michael Halliday. In transitivity, verbs and clauses are classified according to the relationship of the verb to other elements of the structure (Zhang, L., & Xie, L. 2024). The transitivity system interprets human experiences by categorizing them into comprehensible process types, which means through textual analysis, it becomes easy to classify the different types of processes that represent human experience (Halliday, 2004: 170).

### **Material Process**

Material processes in a clause are action verbs such as do, help, and go i.e. 'He does his work'. They are externalized processes (Halliday, 2014). The doers of action in a clause are called 'actor or actors' i.e. 'He painted the wall'. With that, the affected object in the clause is called goal for instance, 'She ironed the clothes'. Another element in the clause which remains an unaffected object, is called range or scope as in the sentence, 'You gave me an idea'. In the process of "transformation", an agent transfers an affected participant to either a recipient or beneficiary as in this sentence 'I gave you a gift

on the eve of your birthday'. All prepositional and adverbial phrases in a clause are labeled as 'circumstances' (Matthiessen, C. M. M , 2014). An example of a circumstance is in the following sentence, 'He was playing football on the ground'.

### **Mental Process**

Mental processes are viewed as internalized processes. These are processes of perceiving, feeling and thinking. A clause with mental processes requires the subject as Sensor and object as Phenomenon (Halliday, 1994, 117). As in this clause.... 'He likes the beautiful sight of the rainbow'. In the sentence underlined 'he' is a sensor, the verb 'likes' is a mental process and 'sight of rainbow' is Phenomenon. There are three types of mental processes i.e. 1. Cognition (verbs of knowing and thinking), 2. Perception (verbs of smelling and seeing), 3. Affection (verbs of loving and liking).

### **Verbal Process**

Verbal processes include Sayer as a subject; verbs uttered through mouth such as say, tell, inform, and ask are verbal processes (Halliday, 1994:107). After the verbal process, it has three more components such as verbiage, reported and quoted in a clause. The example of verbiage is underlined in the clause i.e. 'He told me a story'. The example of a report is underlined in the clause. She asked if she could help me. The example of quoted is used in single or double inverted commas in a clause such as He said, "I am doing great work". If the

verb “say or tell,” is included in a clause, then a recipient must be added (Downing & Lock 2000, 151).

### **Behavioral Process**

Behavioral process refers to physiological and psychological like breathing, coughing, and smiling. They represent outer manifestations of inner workings, the acting out of processes of consciousness and psychological states (Halliday 1976). The Behaver and behavioral process are the main parts of the clause as underlined in the example i.e. ‘He laughed loudly’. Here ‘he’ is an example of Behvor and laughed is Behavioral Process.

### **Relational Process**

Having and being state are in the relation processes. In this type of process, the subject is called a ‘Carrier’ and the object is termed an ‘Attribute’ (Halliday, 1985). As in the sentence, ‘He has a lot of responsibilities’. Here in the sentence, the underlined ‘he’ is a carrier, the underlined ‘has’ is a relational process and the underlined phrase ‘lot of responsibilities’ is an attribute.

### **Existential Process**

These types of processes represent the existence of entities such as humans, events and places. They may be countable and uncountable. The participant which is expressed to exist is called Existent. With that, to specify the location of something, these clauses or structures are used. The structures used tend to specify the quantification and/or the location of something (Wignell, 1994).

**Analysis and Discussion**

**Transitivity Analysis and Thematic Elements in the Poem ‘*The Flower is Torn at the Heart*’.**

In this section, the researcher employs M. Halliday's transitivity framework to analyze various types of processes. Furthermore, the researcher examines how each process contributes to the construction of thematic elements.

**Table 1: Analysis of ‘Material Processes and Thematic Elements’ in the poem ‘*The Flower is Torn at the Heart*’.**

S. No.	Actor	Material Process	Beneficiary	Goal	Scope/Range	Circumstance	Themes	Location
1		is Torn		the flower		at the heart	Infidelity, Hurt	Verse 1
2	Who	destroyed		It			Destruction	Verse 3
3	We	have spent			this evening	under sentence	Punishment, Sufferings	Verse 4
4	No one	has to go			on this journey		Desire, Wish, Willingness	Verse 5
5	I	can still turn					Reunion	Verse 6

Table 1 states the analysis of transitivity in terms of material process and thematic elements used in the poem 'The Flower is Torn at the Heart' by Noshi Gilani. Material processes are viewed as externalized processes (Halliday, 1994). These are action verbs which have been used in verses 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the poem. There are a total of 5 material processes in the poem. Out of these five material processes, two are with affected objects. These two processes are '*torn*' and '*destroyed*' which affect their objects. The material process '*torn*' affects '*the flower*'. In the same way, the material process '*destroyed*' affect the object '*it*'. The affected object in a clause is termed as a goal. So, the '*flower*' and '*it*' in verses 1 and 3 become goals. Furthermore, '*have spent*' in verse 4, '*has to go*' in verse 5, and '*turn*' in verse no 6 are the material processes that do not affect their objects. Unaffected objects are termed as range or scope in a clause or verse. As in verse 4, '*this evening*' and in verse 5, '*on this journey*' are examples of range or scope. The doer or agent of the material process is called an 'actor'. In verse 1, the actor is hidden, as it is not mentioned by whom the flower is torn. Whereas, in verses 3, 4, 5 and 6, the actors act as material processes. In verse no 3 '*who*', in verse no 4, '*we*', and in verse 5, '*No one*' are examples of actors. In short, in verse 1 '*at the heart*' and in verse 4, '*under the sentence*' are an example of circumstances. No beneficiary has been found in all these verses.

Whereas the following analysis indicates how the material processes contribute to the construction of a theme like '*The flower is torn at*

*the heart*'. In this verse '*is torn*' is an example of a material process that takes the readers into the imagination of a lovely flower with its center severely smashed. To emphasize the severity of the agony and loss, the poetess has effectively used the word '*heart*' the most significant part of the flower. Hence, the material process '*is torn*' constructs the theme of infidelity and faithlessness in the poem. Furthermore, in verse 4 '*We have spent this evening under sentence*', '*spent*' is the material process that presents a sense of being restrained or constrained, possibly due to the burden of pain, loss and infidelity. Here, '*spent*' signifies the period, inferring that the evening has been spent under a difficult time. Hence, '*spent*' establishes the theme of punishment in the poem.

In verse 5 '*No one has to go on this journey*', '*to go*' is a material process that shows no one is bound to undergo the destitution and infidelity faced by the poetess herself. Also, the process '*to go*' infers a journey fraught with discomfort and grief and thus a theme of choice and willingness are constructed in the poem. In addition to that, in verse 6 '*I can still turn round if you want*', the '*turn round*' is another material process; whereas '*want*' is a mental process. The process '*turn round*' depicts the theme of return and rejoin; while the process '*want*' suggests the motif of desire. Here, the poetess proposes the choice of pedaling back or changing the path, representing the inclination to evade more agony or adversity.

**Table 2: Analysis of ‘Mental Processes and Thematic Elements’ in the poem ‘*The Flower is Torn at the Heart*’.**

S. No.	Sensor	Mental Process	Phenomenon	Themes	Location
1	You	want		Desire, Will	Verse 6
2	The whole thing	Wavers		Uncertainty	Verse 10
3	We	Honour	our union	Esteem, Respect	Verse 11
4	My heart	gripped	with fear of separation	Estrangement, Disunion	Verse 12
5	My heart	Desires	above all	Wish	Verse 13

Table 2 describes the transitivity in terms of material processes and thematic analysis used in the poem ‘*The Flower is Torn at the Heart*’ by Noshi Gilani. Mental processes are viewed as internalized processes. These are processes of perceiving, feeling and thinking. A clause with mental processes requires the subject as ‘Sensor’ and object as ‘Phenomenon’ (Halliday,1994). As in verse 6, ‘*want*’, in verse 10, ‘*wavers*’, in verse 11, ‘*honour*’, in verse 12, ‘*gripped*’ and in verse 13, ‘*desires*’ are the mental processes. These mental processes are with their subject termed as ‘Sensor’. ‘*you*’ in verse 6, ‘*the whole thing*’ in verse 10, ‘*we*’ in verse 11, and ‘*my heart*’ in verses 12 and



13 function as sensors. In addition, the object as a 'Phenomenon' is used in clauses and verses with mental processes. In verse 11, '*our union*', in verse 12, '*with fear of separation*', and in verse 13, '*above all*' are examples of Phenomenon; whereas, verses 6 and 10 have one phenomenon.

In verse 6, '*I can still turn\_\_round, if you want*', '*want*' is a mental process that suggests the motif of desire. Here, the poetess proposes the choice of pedaling back or changing the path, representing the inclination to evade more agony or adversity. Moreover, in verse 10, '*In the uncertain view of this evening, the whole thing wavers*' the word '*wavers*' is another instance of a mental process in the light of transitivity. The poetess is uncertain about the evening considering it unstable and the process '*wavers*' is the implication of a situation that is characterized by fluctuation and faltering. Hence, in the context of preceding verses, the word '*wavers*' indicates the theme of hesitation.

In verse 11 of the poem, '*How can we honour our union*', the '*honour*' is the mental process in the context of transitivity. The poetess filled with despair rhetorically questions herself regarding the sanctity of the relationship with the help of the word '*honour*' which serves as a theme of esteem and respect; despite the anguish and disappointment, she finds a relationship of reverence that may not last longer. In verse 12, '*When my heart is gripped by fear of separation*', '*is gripped*' is a mental process through which the poetess mournfully

expresses the possible apprehension of disunion. Thus, the theme of esteem and respect in verse 11 suddenly changes into estrangement and disunion in verse 12.

Whereas in verse 14, 'My heart desires above all' the process 'desire' serves as an illustration of mental processes in the framework of transitivity. The poetess expresses an earnest longing and yearning. This verse in general and the word 'desire' in particular specifies a robust, heartfelt craving for something precious and invaluable. In the light of previous verses, this line alters the emphasis from the inquisition of the sanctity of a relationship to expressing an insightful emotive theme of desire.

**Table 3: Analysis of 'Verbal Processes and Thematic Analysis' in the poem 'The Flower is Torn at the Heart'.**

S. No.	Sayer	Verbal Process	Recipient	Verbiage	Reported	Quoted	Themes	Locat
1	Who	can tell					Curiousness	Verse

Table 3 describes the analysis of verbal processes and thematic elements used in the poem 'The Flower is Torn at the Heart' by Noshi Gilani. Verbal processes include 'Sayer' as a subject; verbs uttered through mouth such as 'say, tell, inform' and 'ask' are verbal processes (Halliday, 1995). After the verbal process, it has three more components such as verbiage, reported and quoted in a clause. Verse

3 of the poem contains a verbal process 'tell'. And its performer is 'who' which is called Sayer. This verse is without recipient, verbiage, reported and quoted part. In the whole poem, there is only one verbal process. In the preceding verse 'Who can tell who destroyed it?' the process 'tell' is a verbal process in the light of transitivity and this presents an element of secrecy and curiousness. Thus, it creates the theme of uncertainty and doubt.

**Table 4: Analysis of 'Relational Processes and Thematic Analysis' in the poem 'The Flower is Torn at the Heart'.**

S. No.	Carrier	Relational Process	Attribute	Themes	Location
1	The fragrance	befriends	the breeze	Relationship, Union	Verse 2
2	We	Make	this evening ours	Connection	Verse 14

Table 4 presents the description of relational processes and thematic elements used in the poem 'The Flower is Torn at the Heart' by Noshi Gilani. In this type of process, the subject is called a 'Carrier' and the object is termed as an 'Attribute' (Halliday, 1985). In verse 2, 'befriends' and in verse 14, 'make' function as relational processes. 'The fragrance' in verse 2, and 'we' are subjects termed as 'Carrier'. In addition, 'The breeze' and 'This evening ours' are used as attribute in verses 2 and 14 of the poem. 'Its fragrance befriends the breeze' In

the following verse of the poem, '*befriends*' is an implication of the relational process in the light of the transitivity approach. The relational process '*befriends*' specifically indicates how the odor of the flower intermingles with the breeze. The fragrance and the breeze seem to be in a harmonious relationship with each other, thus, the theme of connection and relationship is manifested in the poem.

Additionally, '*That we make this evening ours*' the last verse of the poem implies a yearning for the present moment. The use of the word '*make*' is a relational process in terms of transitivity. The entire verse particularly the word '*make*' illustrates the theme of relationship which opposes the previous themes of ambiguity and despair, presenting an optimistic attitude amid the pessimism portrayed and reflected in the preceding verses of the poem.

**Table 5: Analysis of 'Behavioral Processes and Thematic Elements' in the poem '*The Flower is Torn at Heart*'.**

S. No.	Behaver	Behavioral Process	Behavior	Themes	Location
1	Every street	is asleep		Carelessness	Verse 7
2	Its my	turn to stay awake		Resilience, Determination	Verse 8

In table 5 states the description of the behavioral process and thematic elements used in the poem '*The Flower is Torn at the Heart*' by Noshi Gilani. Behavioral process refers to physiological and psychological like

breathing, coughing and smiling. They represent outer manifestations of inner workings, the acting out of processes of consciousness and psychological states (Halliday 1976, 55). In verse 7 of the poem '*is asleep*' and in verse 8, '*stay awake*' are used as behavioral processes. In these verses, '*every street*' and '*turn stay awake*' are subjects, which are Behavior of the behavioral processes in the poem.

In verse 7 of the poem '*Every street in this city is asleep*' '*is asleep*' is a behavioral process in terms of transitivity which depicts the behaviour of quietness and carelessness of the people of the city which is noiseless and sluggish. Thus, stressing the theme of rest and calm. This vivid image contradicts the earlier image of the torn flower's heart, signifying a prevalent quietness or inactivity in the atmosphere. It amplifies the theme of desolation and tranquility introduced by the flower's anguish in the poem. In this verse '*It's my turn to stay awake*', '*stay awake*' is yet another example of a behavioral process in the poem. '*Stay awake*' symbolizes vigilance or attentiveness, signifying an eagerness to face hardships or tolerate adversity. It strengthens the theme of resilience and determination in the poem.

### **Findings of the Study**

The findings of the study shows that various types of processes have been found in the poem. These processes are material such as '*torn, destroyed and go*'; verbal processes such as '*tell*'; mental processes such as '*want*', and '*desire*'; the relational process is '*befriends*'; behavioral processes such as '*is asleep*', '*stay awake*' and '*honour*';

no existential process has been found in the whole poem. Moreover, these processes in the poem construct various themes such as themes of disloyalty, friendship, punishment, relationship, carelessness and desires.

The findings of the study are similar to the study of Bashir (2023) who applied a transitivity approach to the poems '*Still I Rise*' and '*Phenomenal Woman*' to find out the types of processes. The results of the study reveal that five types of processes have been used in both poems. With that, it has been found that material processes were the most dominant processes used in both poems. Moreover, the types of processes represent the speaker's struggles against the conventional rules that were used for oppressing women in America. The limitation of the study is that the transitivity approach was applied in the analysis of a sonnet '*The Flower is Torn at the Heart*' by Noshi Gilani. The findings of the study are useful for future researchers, readers and writers in terms of building and extracting themes through the use of transitivity on different genres of literature in various languages.

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