Journal of English Language Literature and Education
Vol. 3 Issue 2 (October - December 2021) pp 1-19
ISSN: 2710-4923 (Online)
ISSN: 2663-3485 (Print)

Analysis of Linguistic Choices in Bapsi Sidhwa's An American Brat

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Abstract

The present study contributes to the growing literature on Pakistani novels in English by exploring transitivity choices in Bapsi Sidhwa's An American Brat from Halliday's (2004) systemic functional grammar (SFG) perspective. Data of the study consisted of 1158 clauses that were selected from the novel. The following techniques were used to analyse data: comprehending the selected text of the novel, splitting the text into clauses, identifying processes, participants and circumstance types and drawing the conclusion based on the analysed text. The findings of the study revealed that all types of processes were found in the novel. Among 1158 clauses, the material clauses were computed most frequent with the frequency of (566), making a proportion of (48.87%). The second most frequent projection was of the mental clauses with the frequency of (392) making a proportion of (33.85%). The concentration of verbal processes in the text was (123), having a proportion of (10.62%). In comparison, the lowest projection was found in behavioural processes (50), making a proportion of (4.31%), followed by relational processes (17) making a proportion of (1.46%) and existential processes (10) making a proportion of (0.86%). The study results showed that Sidhwa was interested in the description of physical actions and feelings of different characters. For this purpose, she used material and mental processes more than any other process in An American Brat. The current study proved that systemic functional linguistic theory is a helpful tool for analysing any literary or non-literary text. It has implications for further research in stylistic and narratological studies through the transitivity system of analysis.

Keywords: *Transitivity, Processes, Participants, Circumstances, Metafunction, SFG*

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Introduction

Linguistic analysis of fiction enables the researchers to analyze the structure and organization of the texts through linguistic choices (Qasim, Talaat, Khushi & Azhar,2018). The ideology of the writer and the characterization process makes the text easy to understand. This is only possible when grammatical categories given in the text are appropriately identified. Systemic functional grammar (SFG) is a tool that illustrates the semantics of the text through the analysis of the language used in the text (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Mwinlaaru, 2012; Qasim, Talaat & Khushi, 2018). This type of analysis helps understand the writer's intention through linguistic (transitivity) choices in the text (Qasim, Talaat & Sibtain, 2018). The focus of this study is on the characterization of different characters and identification of Sidhwa's point of view and ideology behind the characterization in the novel, *An American Brat*. The study provides an opportunity for understanding the theme and meanings of the novel.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are given below:

1. To explore the kinds of transitivity processes used in the novel, *An American Brat*
2. To assess the significance of different processes in the identification of characters' roles in *An American Brat*

Research Questions

The present research addresses the following questions:

1. What kinds of processes have been used in the novel, *An American Brat* by Bapsi Sidhwa?
2. To what extent are different processes significant in the identification of characters' roles in Bapsi Sidhwa's *An American Brat*?

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Halliday's SFG helps identify the hidden meaning of any literary or non-literary text. It is a framework for explaining and describing the language. It describes the surface structure of the language and the cultural background and context in the usage of language (Halliday, 1985, 1994; Martin & Rose, 2003; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013, 2004).

SFG is an approach that deals with the role and functions of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). It stresses the structure and organization of language. It is concerned with the purpose of language use. It describes the structure of language as a semiotic system and explains its role in different social contexts (Halliday, 1985). According to Fowler et al. (1988), systemic functional linguistics is a comprehensive and most applicable theory. This theory gives a particular direction in making the meanings of a text according to the situation and context of discourse. According to Van Dijk (2006), SFL is a tool that derives meanings from the text not only from the grammatical point of view but also with the choice of words in the text. These linguistic choices depict the happenings and actions performed by the actors or participants.

According to Halliday,

> *Our most powerful impression of experience is that it consists of a flow of events or going on. This flow of events is chunked into quanta of change by the grammar of the clause: each quantum is modelled as a figure – a figure of happening, doing, sensing, saying or being (2004, p. 170).*

The real world of happenings and phenomena can be explained through three metafunctions given by Halliday (1985): ideational, interpersonal and textual. The ideational metafunction tells about the new and unknown information given in the discourse. The interpersonal metafunction expresses the use of language to show the personal and social relations, and the textual metafunction of language deals with the message of the clause and expresses the meanings and context of a discourse (Cui, Hu, Pan, & Hu, 2006).

Based on Shafqat Ullah (2018) the current research is the application of Halliday's transitivity system from SFG. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) stated that transitivity is a system that helps in the identification and realization of ideational meanings of a discourse. It enables us to understand the writers' or speakers' meanings and

their experience of the natural world, embedded in their choice of words at the level of clause. According to Fowler et al. (1988), transitivity is a semantic idea that discusses the realities of the world. It is also a type of pattern that predicts the point of view of different authors regarding the phenomenon of the word. A clause is the basic unit of SFG, and the central part of the clause is a process. The interpretation of real-life experiences is only possible through processes. The summary of different process types, participants and circumstances, has been given in table 1.

Table 1
Summary of processes types

Process Types	**Participant Types**	**Circumstance Types**
Material	Actor, Goal, Beneficiary, Range	Extent
Mental	Senser, Phenomenon	Location
Relational	Carrier, Attribute-not exactly a participant, Identified & Identifier	Manner Cause
Verbal	Sayer, Quoted/Reported (one or the other), Receiver, Verbiage, Target	Accompaniment Matter Angle
Behavioural	Behaver	
Existential	Existent	

Source: (Melrose, 1995; Bloor & Bloor, 1995)

Earlier Studies in the Field

Several significant research studies on systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and grammatical metaphor (GM) aim to investigate political, literary or other discourses in various veins and genres. A few of them are discussed here. The research on medical articles was done by Hashim (1996). The study aimed to analyze the morphology and organization of language in medical texts. The tool for the analysis in this research was SFG, using the transitivity system. The structure and grammar of medical articles were focused much in terms of theme and mood. The texts were analyzed keeping in mind three metafunctions of language (interpersonal, textual and experiential). She concluded that medical texts vary from other genres in the use of language.

A comparison of the medium of the Federal Ordinance Act in Malaysia was made by Hwang (2003). Two mediums were the English version and the Malaysian version of Act. The comparison findings described that material processes are widely used in the text than the existential process. She also claimed that Halliday's idea of using relational processes in the academic text is wrong. Maria (2005) analyzed eight love songs using Halliday's transitivity system. The findings indicate that material processes have the highest frequency in love songs because the actions performed by the lovers see love. The second higher frequency is of mental processes. They show the emotions of the lovers. No behavioural process is used in the love songs. Other processes have the least frequency and proportion in these songs.

Gallardo's (2006) work on Shaw's (1913) novel, *Pagmalian*, is exemplary. He used the social class system and the method of transmission to examine gender. The transitivity analysis of the data shows that the male and female characters (such as Elijah Dullet and Henry Higgins) used language differently, indicating their characteristic features. The study concluded that male characters used content processing type's related to rational content and had a clear goal of assigning them a powerful role in society, and the female characters were involved in psychological language choices and psychological processes. It showed their tender feelings, emotions, intimacy and affection. The author's analysis demonstrates the power of language in describing ideology, worldview and reality.

A detailed study of the positive analysis of a literary text was made by Alfonso and German (2007). They took two short stories written by different authors and used the transitivity model to compare abstractions from the connection of two post-colonial literary texts written by Jamaican Kincaid and Sherman Alexei. They concluded that the literary text provides an objective linguistic interpretation of the literature and helps understand the roles assigned to the characters and their functions.

Sim (2008) analyzed six reports of three English newspapers titled Crocodile Hunter. She avers that the percentage of material processes in the text is higher than any other process

type. The higher frequency of material processes describes the actions performed. She states that a transitivity is a tool that can identify the role of characters and the text's theme. The transitivity analysis of *The Wild and the Rose* by Mehmood, Amber, Ameer & Faiz (2014) depicted the role of process types in the identification of characters. They claimed that every type of process shows the role of the actor and participant regarding the situation. The theme of the text can be predicted through the transitivity analysis using SFG as a framework.

Jacobson and Reid (2010) carried out a study on essay writing. The purpose of the study was to find out the effectiveness of linguistic choices in essay writing. Both the high and low ranked schools were selected as a source of data. The participants were the year four students. The clauses of the essays were analyzed using the transitivity of SFG. The analysis showed that relational and mental processes were the central processes of the texts. The data findings indicated that the creation of high ranked school students has a clear macrostructure, and their ideas were developed properly, but it was absent in low ranked school students.

Qasim, Sibtain and Talaat (2018) studied Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*. They used Halliday's (1994) SFL framework to explore transitivity choices available in 21 texts selected from the novel. The focus of the study was to point out processes and participants through different characters of the novel. The results of the study showed that material processes are dominant. The analysis of the texts showed that females are dominated in the novel. Qasim, Talaat, Khushi and Azhar's (2018) other significant work is Hamid's *Moth Smoke*. A transitivity system was used for the analysis of 21 selected texts. Their study focused on transitivity patterns that were associated with the main characters of the novel. All types of processes were found in the texts. The material process was the most frequent in the text. The mental process was second in the position. The lowest projection was found in existential and behavioural processes. The study concluded that transitivity analysis is a useful tool for the analysis of different genres.

Shah et al. (2014) analyzed the representation of the female characters

in *Mann o Salwa* employing the transitivity system of analysis. They concluded that Pakistani women had been assigned a passive role in society. They are dependent on men. The focus of the study was on the fact that the female writers also view women in the same way as do male authors. As per the analysis, the use of material and mental processes show that the women are oppressed, and the males and other females influence their actions.

Another research was conducted by Qasim, Talaat and Khushi (2018). They analyzed Hamid's *The Reluctant* Fundamentalist using Halliday's transitivity system. 21 texts of the novel were selected as data. These texts include different processes, participants and circumstances. The proposed research focused on transitivity patterns that are associated with the main character of the novel, Changez. All types of processes were found in the texts. The material process was the most frequent in the text. The mental process was second in the position. The lowest projection was found in existential and behavioural processes. The proposed research concluded that transitivity analysis is a useful tool for the analysis of different genres.

Methodology

The present study used a mixed-method approach: qualitative as well as quantitative paradigms for the collection and analysis of data. The data of this research comprised the strings of clauses from Sidhwa's *An American Brat.* W-Matrix and AntConc (3.5.7) were used as instruments for this research. W-Matrix was used for the identification of processes and participants in the novel. AntConc(2018) software was used for counting the frequencies of different processes and participants in the novel. The data analysis procedure for this research consisted of the following steps: i) splitting the whole text into clauses; ii) classifying the types of process and participants iii) taking the percentage and proportion of the types of processes and participants iv) and drawing a conclusion based on the data analysis. The focus of the analysis was on the process-participant while circumstance, the peripheral element, was not discussed in the current study.

Results and Discussions

The current research analyzed selected data at the clause level employing the transitivity system of

Table 2
Processes types in An American Brat

Sr. No	Type of Process	Frequency	%
01	Material	566	48.877
02	Mental	392	33.851
03	Relational	17	01.468
04	Verbal	123	10.621
05	Behavioural	50	04.317
06	Existential	10	00.863

SFG. The data of the study consisted of 1158 clauses. The number of processes types and their proportions which were identified through the analysis of the data are given in the tables below:

Based on the results of table 2, the material clauses were computed most frequent with the frequency of (566), making a proportion of (48.87%). The second most frequent projection was of the mental clauses with the frequency of (392) making a proportion of (33.85%). The concentration of verbal processes in the text was (123) having a proportion of (10.62%), while the lowest projection was found in the behavioural processes (50) making a proportion of (4.31%), relational processes (17) making a proportion of (1.46%) and existential processes (10) making a proportion of (0.86%). The highest frequency is found in material processes (566), and the lowest frequency is of existential processes.

Table 3
Types of participants

Sr. No	Type of Participant	Frequency	%
01	Actor	186	17.547
02	Goal	134	12.641
03	Scope	106	10
04	Recipient	68	6.415
05	Initiator	73	6.886
06	Senser	60	5.660
07	Phenomenon	67	6.320
08	Client	98	9.245
09	Carrier	57	5.377
10	Attribute	08	0.754
11	Attributor	12	1.132
12	Token	09	0.849
13	Value	11	1.037
14	Existent	06	0.566
15	Sayer	54	5.094
16	Behaver	24	2.264
17	Verbiage	87	8.207

According to the results of table 3, 17 different types of participants were used in *An American Brat*. The actor participant was computed as the most frequent participant with a frequency of (186) in the novel. The goal was projected (134) times in the novel. The scope was used (106), the recipient (68) and the initiator (73) times. The existent participant was least

Table 4
Examples of material processes

1	ZareenGinwalla *Actor*	Hurried Process Material	into the hall when the bell rang	
2	Cyrus *Actor*	Sat Process Material	on the bed to remove his shoes	
3	Feroza *Actor*	ShotProcess Material	out of her chair	
4	Zareen *Actor*	Jerked Process Material	her arms *Goal*	to bring the sari edges together.
5	She *Actor*	Brushed Process Material	Them *Goal*	away impatiently.
6	Mr Miller *Actor*	had survived Process Material		a short stint in Vietnam *Goal*
7	Zareen *Actor*	examined Process Material		the silver prayer tray. *Scope*
8	Zareen *Actor*	had wrapped Process Material		the rich palu end of her yellow tanchoi sari *Scope*
9	Feroza *Actor*	Lit Process Material	an oil lamp *Scope*	and saluted the enormous framed portraits.
10	Feroza *Client*	was received Process Material		at the airport with garlands
11	Feroza *Actor*	Bought Process Material	a small arrangement of flowers *Goal*	For Mala. *Client*

used in the novel. It was used (06) times, making the proportion of (0.56%).

Discussion

Material Process and Its Participants

On the whole, the study found out that the writer has used the material process more frequently than any other process. This is because it is based on actions and events that depict the age of political turmoil in Pakistan. The examples of the material process and its participants have been given in table 4. Material processes (MP) and participants are in bold form.

As the novel indicates the political turmoil of Pakistan, the material clauses are more frequent in the text because they show the process of doing (Qasim et al., 2018). Most of the characters are concerned with the physical actions performed in different situations. Physical actions are taken by the main characters of the novel, Zareen, Feroza, David, Manek and Cyrus. Manek is the receiver in most actions of the novel because Zareen takes all the work from Manek in looking after her daughter. Feroza is the centre of the action, the affected one that is called Goal. For example, when Feroza fell in love with an American man, she immediately reached America as soon as possible. Zareen is a more active participant in the text as many actions are performed, while her daughter is used as a goal in all her actions. Similarly, Feroza is used as a beneficiary as more than 80% of services are made for her. In the transitivity system, the receiver of the services or for whom services are made is named the client of the clause. Ninety-eight participants are working as the client in material clauses, and most of them indicate the services made for Feroza.

Mental Process and Its Participants

Mental processes are the processes of feeling, sensing and thinking. Unlike material processes that tell about the material actions and happening of the outer world, mental processes construe the inner feelings of a being predicting the outer world phenomenon. The participants in mental clauses also differ from those of material clauses. The participants in the mental clauses are senser and phenomenon. Some examples from the text have been quoted in table 5. Mental

Table 5
Examples of Mental Process (Ment. P)

Sr.No	Participant	Processes	Phenomenon
1	She *Senser*	Feels *Ment. P*	she has to conform, be like her Muslim friends. *Phenomenon*
2	She *Senser*	Wants *Ment. P*	you to be like her friends' mothers, that's all *Phenomenon*
3	Cyrus *Senser*	Felt *Ment. P*	he understood his wife well enough. *Phenomenon*
4	Cyrus *Senser*	had noticed *Ment.P*	Feroza's reaction to the husky 'youth. *Phenomenon*
5	Cyrus *Senser*	had wanted *Ment. P*	hisdaughter to apologize. *Phenomenon*
6	Cyrus *Senser*	had noticed *Ment. P*	Feroza's reaction to the husky 'youth. *Phenomenon*
7	She *Senser*	Knew *Ment. P*	exactly what Feroza had put the callers through. *Phenomenon*
8	Feroza *Senser*	Realized *Ment. P*	how strange and rude she sounds *Phenomenon*

processes (Ment. P) and senser are in bold form.

This novel deals with the relationship between two lovers, Feroza and David. So, a clear picture of their emotions can be found in the shape of the mental processes. Their love is the central theme of the novel, which is shown by using mental clauses. The frequency of participants working as a sensor is 60. The number of phenomenon participants in mental clauses is 67. This shows detailed information about the sensed one. So, in the current study, the sensed or observed one is Feroza,, the phenomenon in most mental clauses. The analysis indicates different emotions which are associated with the

sensed one. Phenomenon tells about the cognitive process running through the mind of the characters. The thoughts of the main characters, i.e.Zareen, Cyrus a Manek and other minor participants, regarding the issue of David and Feroza's marriage are part of the phenomenon. It points out that the perceptions, emotions and desires of characters are also part of the phenomenon.

Relational Process

Relational processes assign a quality to a person or object (Kurania, 2018; Qasim et al., 2018). The object may be living or non-living. The main participants in the relational clauses are attribute and carrier. Unlike material and mental processes, the relational process has two inherent participants. Examples of relational processes (R.P) have been given in table 6. All types of relational processes, i.e. attributive, identifying, and relational processes of possession, have been denoted by R.P, but the participants have been identified respectively.

Table 6

Examples of relational Processes

Sr.No	Participant	Process
1	She *Carrier*	became conscious *R.P- Attribute*
2	He *Carrier*	Was taller *R.P- Attribute*
3	He Carrier	was half a foot taller than her five feet four inches R.P- Attribute
4	He *Carrier*	was also very shy *R.P- Attribute*
5	Her parents *Token*	were Jews. *R.P-Value*
6	He *Carrier*	Wasself-unconscious *R.P-Attribute*
7	Feroza *Possessor*	Hada politically acute and restless mind, precocious for her age. *R.P-Possessed*
8	*Token*	*R.P- Value*

Verbal Process and Its Participants

The processes of saying are named as verbal processes. This process consists of sayer, receiver, verbal process itself, verbiage and target. Different clauses from the text have been quoted in table 7.

Table 7
Examples of verbal processes (VP)

Sr. No	Participant	Process	Participants	
1	Ayah and the sweeper's wife *Sayer*	Asked *V.P*	"What are these women's rights?" *Verbiage*	
2	The Landlord *Sayer*	Said *V.P*	he'd have a word with his tenants. *Verbiage*	
3	the taller of the two policemen *Sayer*	Asked *V.P*	'You occupy these premises?' *Verbiage*	
4	Feroza *Sayer*	Said *V.P*	'You should've taken it away from him. I don't think he's gonna call you *Verbiage*	
5	He *Sayer*	Spoke *V.P*	with such vehement conviction and injured pride that Zareenbecame confused. *Circumstance*	
6	Mike *Sayer*	Said *V.P*	to joe, *Receiver*	'I got your messages'. *Verbiage*
7	Zareen *Sayer*	Said, *V.P*	'We are sending Feroza to you' *Verbiage*	
8	Manek *Sayer*	Might inquire *V.P*		
9	Cyrus *Sayer*	Said *V.P*	Look. Do you want the call or not? You have to be smart, that's all. *Verbiage*	
10	She *Sayer*	Said *V.P*	"Mummy, please don't come to school dressed like that." *Verbiage*	
11	Ayah and the sweeper's wife *Sayer*	Asked *V.P*	"What are these women's rights?" *Verbiage*	

After material and mental processes, the third higher frequency is of verbal processes that are 123. This frequency indicates the communication process of all the characters in the novel. In verbal processes, the participant's concentration 'sayer' is more than other participants, and most of the communication consists of the main character's utterances' like Zareen, Cyrus, Feroza, Manek, and David. However, the least participation is of David because all other characters are members of the same family except David. They are fully aware of one another's attitude and communicative behaviour.

In most of the conversation, Manek and Feroza appear as the receiver of Zareen's sayings, the central participant of the communication. In some cases, they have to listen to the conversation of Cyrus, so in this situation, too Manek and Feroza are the receiver and respond to Cyrus' sayings. The reason behind this is that both Manek and the Feroza are younger in the family and have to listen to the conversation of their elders. The target of conversation among the main characters is Manek because Zareen often addressed Manek strictly and ordered her to complete work because he is the youngest brother. In some cases, Feroza is the target of Zareen's conversation when she gives directions to her daughter.

Behavioural Process and its Participant

Behavioural processes are the processes that lie in between the material and mental processes. They construe physiological and psychological (human) behaviour-mental and verbal behaviour (Thompson,1996). Halliday (1985) describes these processes semantically as a 'half-way house' between mental and material processes'. 'They usually have only one (obligatory) participant-the behaver, typically a conscious being but the process is more like one of doing, as in material processes' (Qasim, 2019). Examples of behavioural processes have been given in table 8.

Table 8
Examples of behavioural processes

Sr. No	Participant	Process
1	Feroza *Behaver*	Stared *Behav. P*
2	Feroza *Behaver*	Is confused *Behav. P*
3	Farhi *Behaver*	Laughed, shrugged to express her helplessness *Behav. P*
4	Zareen *Behaver*	Smiled *Behav. P*
5	The man *Behaver*	Sat up straighter and looked briefly but politely at Zareen *Behav. P*
6	The girls *Behaver*	sat tense and panting in their living room *Behav. P*
7	Cyrus *Behaver*	Looked Puzzled equally *Behav. P*

In behavioural processes' the frequency of behavers behaving in different situations is 24. All the main characters of the novel are behaving differently in different situations. The behaviour of Zareen when she tried to influence her daughter is quite soft because she has to satisfy her daughter to break up with David. Feroza is much tensed because she does not want to break up with David. Her aggressive behaviour cannot affect her mother. David is also depressed but never showed his behaviour because he knew the critical situation created by Feroza's mother. Jo is also a participant in the novel who expresses different behaviours in preventing Feroza from visiting Pakistan. When Feroza wrote a letter to her mother and informed her about her wish of marriage with a non-Parsee, Zareen and Cyrus showed aggressive behaviour saying 'I got a letter from Feroza, 'she said haltingly, *sniffing* between her sobs.'Feroza? Cyrus *shouted*, what has happened to Feroza?'Zareen below her nose *swallowed*, and with a supreme effort of will suspended her weeping to gasp.'

Existential Processes

Existential processes are the processes that point out the existence of a place or object.

Existential processes have a single participant named existent. Existent can be animate and inanimate objects. There is no proper subject used in the clause, but the expletive 'there' plays the role of subject and central participant. In these processes, extra information is named as a circumstantial element. Examples of existential processes (EP) have been given in table 9.

Table 9
Examples of Existential Processes (EP)

Sr. No	Participant	Process	
1	There *Existential There*	Are *EP*	no signs of a break-in *Existent*
2	There *Existential There*	Was *EP*	no one holding them back *Existent*
3	There *Existential There*	Was *EP*	a dramatic pause *Existent*
4	There *Existential There*	Was *EP*	a raucous burst of laughter *Existent*
5	There *Existential There*	Were *EP*	no waitresses in Pakistan, only waiters. *Existent*

As it is clear from the statistical configuration in table 9, existential processes make the lowest frequency and percentage in the novel, so the names of places and objects mentioned in the novel are less critical. The frequency of existent is only (06), which denotes the least frequency of existents in the novel. The most famous places mentioned in the novel are Lahore and the USA, and less famous places are names of universities and cities of the USA.

Conclusions

The characterisation is a process that helps in the identification of characters performing in particular situations. Using the ideational metafunction of SFG, the roles of different characters have been identified. The frequency of process, participant and circumstance types predict the position of every character in the novel and political turmoil of Pakistan. On the whole, a higher frequency of material and mental processes shows that the writer is

interested in describing the physical actions and feelings of different characters in the novel. The current study also concludes that transitivity from systemic functional linguistic theory is one of the most important analytical tools for identifying and analyzing ideational concerns in any novel. This study only applied ideational metafunction for the analysis of the novel. Interpersonal and textual metafunctions can also be applied for understanding the meanings. It has implications for further research in stylistic and narratology studies.

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