

TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS: REPRESENTATION OF LOVE IN WILDE'S THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE ROSE

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ABSTRACT

This study reorients representation of love in Oscar Wilde's short story *The Nightingale and the Rose* in a more focused way by subjecting it to Halliday's transitivity model of text analysis. The transitivity analysis showed how Wilde balances the concept of love which, upon cursory glance, appears to tilt towards the protagonist, the nightingale, with the arousal of sympathy. Transitivity analysis of the short story by taking into account the processes associated with the main characters enabled to bring to limelight Wilde's widely acknowledged and debated view of contraries by presenting the nightingale and the young student of philosophy as two contrary views of love balancing each other. The finding through linguistic tool of transitivity is based on the assumption that language form is not fortuitous, but performs a communicative function.

Keywords: The Nightingale and the Rose, Oscar Wilde, Linguistics, Stylistics, Transitivity Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely believed that people who study and use a language are interested in how they can do things with language, how they can make meanings build up and be understood through choices of words and grammatical resources. Bloor and Bloor claim that "when people use language, their language acts produce – construct meaning" (2004, p. 2). Kroger and Wood (2000, p. 4) believe that language is taken to be not simply a tool for description and a medium of communication but as a social practice, a way of doing things. The study of language is so important that, as Fairclough (1989, p. 2) states, "using language is the most common form of social behaviour" and we depend on language in our public and private interaction, determining our relationships with other individuals and the social institutions we inhabit. For Halliday (1985, xiv), "a language is interpreted as a system of meanings, accompanied by forms through which the meanings can be realized and answer the question, "how are these meanings expressed?" This puts the forms of a language in a different perspective: as means to an end, rather than as an end in themselves." It is from this point of view of language that systemic functional linguistics was developed by Halliday and his associates during the 1960s. Fairclough claims that language "is a material form of ideology, and language is invested by ideology" (2001, p. 73). Social language or discourse is not only representational but intervenes in social change because "discourse contributes to the creation and recreation of the relations, subjects...and objects which populate the social world" (p. 73). That is to say, discourses are material effects of ideology which also have a strong impact on shaping our sense of reality. Making the same point, Fowler makes the link between discourse and ideology even clearer when he defines discourse as "socially and institutionally originating ideology, encoded in language" (1986, p. 42).

With this idea in mind, in this paper, I will examine the function of language as useful tool in the short story "The Nightingale and the Rose" by Oscar Wilde in the light of Halliday's

theoretical framework on transitivity. The aim is to present two views of love via two major characters.

Transitivity analysis has been widely used to understand the language of speakers and writers. It examines the structure of sentences which are represented by processes, the participants involved in these processes, and the circumstances in which processes and participants are involved. Using transitivity analysis, researchers have tried to reveal that language structures can produce certain meanings and ideology which are not always explicit for readers. In other words, the task of functional analysis, particularly transitivity analysis, is to discover the relation between meanings and wordings that accounts for the organization of linguistic features in a text.

As a pioneer and scholar in transitivity analysis, Halliday's study of William Golding's *The Inheritors* is an influential example. In this analysis, Halliday points out how understanding grammar, especially transitivity, can help interpret the meaning in a literary text. According to Halliday's theory, patterns of transitivity, including processes, participants, and the circumstances, occur in the clauses and sentences of a text. He claims that "transitivity is the set of options whereby the speaker encodes his experience and transitivity is really the cornerstone of the semantic organization of experience" (p. 81).

Theory on Transitivity

The systemic functional linguistics approach to discourse analysis is based on the model of "language as a social semiotic" outlined in the works of Halliday. Language is used functionally, what is said depends on what one needs to accomplish. In Halliday's theory, language expresses three main kinds of meanings simultaneously: ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings (1985). Among them, the ideational meaning (the clause as representation) serves for the expression of "content" in language, that is, our experience of the real world, including the experience of our inner world. When we use language we often use it to speak of something or someone doing something. That is why the ideational meaning can be referred to as experiential meaning coming from the clause as representation.

The interpersonal meaning helps to establish and maintain social relations; the individual is identified and reinforced in this aspect by enabling him/her to interact with others by expression of their own individuality.

The textual meaning creates links between features of the text with elements in the context of situation; it refers to the manner in which a text is organized. In other words, the textual meaning comes from the clause as message. The clause gets its meaning/message from its thematic structure. Halliday and Matthiesen defines the theme of clause as a "starting point of the message: it is what the clause is going to be about" (1976, p. 64). With that, the theme serves to locate and orientate the clause within the context. The other part of the message that extends and elaborates the theme is the rheme. Therefore, a clause consists of both a theme and a rheme. Halliday also claims that the three types of meanings presented in language are not accidental but are necessarily in place because we need them to perform functions in social life. In constructing experiential meaning, there is one major system of grammatical choice involved: the system of transitivity or process type. I have chosen transitivity because of all the grammatical aspects analysed, it produces the fruitful data on the text. In his *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, Halliday identifies transitivity as follows:

A fundamental property of language is that it enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of their experience of what goes on around them and inside them. ...Our most powerful conception of reality is that it consists of “goings-on”: of doing, happening, feeling, being. These goings-on are sorted out in the semantic system of language, and expressed through the grammar of the clause... This... is the system of transitivity. Transitivity specifies the different types of processes that are recognised in the language and the structures by which they are expressed (1985, p. 101).

The theoretical framework of transitivity was established and developed by Halliday. Clauses represent events and processes of various kinds, and transitivity aims to make clear how the action is performed, by whom and on what. Transitivity is an important and powerful semantic concept in Halliday. It is part of the ideational function of language, therefore, an essential tool in the analysis of representation. Implicitly and crucially, different social structures and values require different patterns of transitivity.

In other words, transitivity can show how speakers/writers encode in language their mental reflection of the world and how they account for their experience of the world around them. Halliday's theory that transitivity is measurable will be used to study the clausal structure which is based on the main verb of the sentence. According to this theory, in transitivity different processes are distinguished, classified and known as Material processes, Relational processes, and Mental processes.

Material processes of transitivity are processes of doing, usually physical and tangible actions. Halliday calls them action clauses expressing the fact that something or someone undertakes some action or some entity “does” something – which may be done to some other entity. These processes can be probed by asking what did x do? Two essential participants usually appear in material process are the *Actor* – the doer of the process – and the *Goal* – the person or entity affected by the process.

Mental processes usually encode mental reactions such as perception, thoughts and feelings. Mental processes give an insight into people's consciousness and how they sense the experience of the reality. These can be probed by asking what do you think/ feel/know about x? Mental processes have two participants: the *Senser* – the conscious being who is involved in a Mental process – and the *Phenomenon* – which is felt, thought, or seen by the conscious *Senser*.

Relational processes construe the relationships of being and having between two participants. There are two different types of Relational processes; one is called *Identifying Relational* which serves the purpose of defining and the participants involved are *Token* and *Value*. Thus the *Value* serves to define the identity of the *Token*. The other type of Relational process is the *attributive Relational* which serves to describe. The participants associated with it are the *Carrier* and the *Attribute* and we can say that “the x (realized by *Carrier*) is a member of the class y (realized by *Attribute*)”.

There are also three subsidiary process types that share the characteristic features of each of the three main processes. Between *Material* and *Mental* processes lie *Behavioural* processes that characterize the outer expression of inner working and reflect physiological and psychological behaviours such as breathing, laughing, sneezing...

Behavioural processes usually have one participant who is typically a conscious one, called the Behaver. Between Mental and Relational processes are *Verbal* processes, which represent the art of saying and its synonyms. Usually three participants are involved in Verbal processes: the Sayer is responsible for verbal process; the *Receiver* is the person at whom the verbal process is directed; and the *Verbiage* is the nominalised statement of the verbal process.

And between Relational and Material processes are *Existential* processes which prove states of being, existing, and happening. Existential processes typically employ the verb be or its synonyms such as exist, arise, occur. The only participant in this process is Existent which follows the there is /are sequences.

Table 1. Examples of different process types from “The Nightingale and the Rose”

| Sr. No. | Process Type | Example |
|---------|--------------|--|
| 1 | Material | The Prince gives a ball tomorrow night. |
| 2 | Mental | ..she looked out through the leaves, and wondered. |
| 3 | Behavioral | What I sing of, he suffers. |
| 4 | Existential | Here at last is a true lover. |
| 5 | Verbal | She said that she would dance with me if I brought her red roses, cried the young Student. |
| 6 | Relational | ..and the little Lizard, who was something of a cynic laughed outright. |

There is no priority of one process type over another so Halliday and Matthiessen portray the interrelationship between transitivity processes as a sphere which enables us to construe and portray our experiential meanings of the world, how we perceive what is going on (1976, p. 172). Transitivity processes are also useful in uncovering the participants involved, how the speaker/writer locate himself in relation to the others, and whether they take an active or passive role in the communication.

Adaptation of Transitivity Analysis in “The Nightingale and the Rose”

The short story, The Nightingale and the Rose was analysed through transitivity on selective text of the short story in order to get a clear idea of frequent and reoccurring processes, participants and circumstances that have been used.

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“She [*Sayer*] said [*Pr: Verbal*] that she [*Actor*] would dance [*Pr: Material*] with me [*Circ: Accompaniment*] if I [*Actor*] brought [*Pr: Material*] her red roses [*Recipient*] {*Verbiage*},” cried [*Pr: Verbal*] the young Student [*Sayer*]; “but in all my garden [*Circ: Location; spatial*] there is [*Pr: Existential*] no red rose [*Existent*] {*Verbiage*}.”...

“No red rose in all my garden! [*Verbiage*]” he [*Sayer*] cried [*Pr: Verbal*], and his beautiful eyes [*Goal*] filled [*Pr: Material*] with tears [*Actor*]. “Ah, on what little things [*Range*] does happiness [*Actor*] depend [*Pr: Material*]! I [*Actor*] have read [*Pr: Material*] all that the wise men have written [*Range*], and all the secrets of philosophy [*Value*] are [*Pr: Relational; identifying*] mine [*Token*], yet for want of a red rose [*Circ: Purpose*] is my life [*Recipient*] made [*Pr: Material*] wretched.” [*Goal*]

...His hair [Carrier] is [Pr: Relational; attributive] dark [Attribute] as the hyacinth-blossom [Circ: Manner], and his lips [Carrier] are [Pr: Relational; attributive] red [Attribute] as the rose of his desire [Circ: Manner]; but passion [Actor] has made [Pr: Material] his face [Range] like pale ivory [Circ: Manner], and sorrow [Actor] has set [Pr: Material] her seal [Range] upon his brow [Circ: Location; spatial].”

...Pearls and pomegranates [Actor] cannot buy [Pr: Material] it [Range], nor is it [Actor] set forth [Pr: Material] in the market-place [Circ: Location; spatial]. It [Actor] may not be purchased [Pr: Material] of the merchants [Range], nor can it [Actor] be weighed out [Pr: Material] in the balance [Range] for gold [Circ: Purpose].”

...She [Actor] will dance [Pr: Material] so lightly [Circ: Manner] that her feet [Actor] will not touch [Pr: Material] the floor [Range], and the courtiers [Actor] in their gay dresses [Range] will throng [Pr: Material] around her [Beneficiary]. But with me [Circ: Accompaniment] she [Actor] will not dance [Pr: Material], for I [Carrier] have [Pr: Relational; attributive] no red rose [Attribute] to give [Pr: Material] her [Recipient]”; and he [Actor] flung [Pr: Material] himself [Goal] down on the grass [Circ: Location; spatial], and buried [Pr: Material] his face [Range] in his hands [Circ: Location; spatial], and wept [Pr: Behavioral].

“Why is he weeping? [Verbiage]” asked [Pr: Verbal] a little Green Lizard [Sayer], as he [Actor] ran [Pr: Material] past him [Range] with his tail [Circ: Accompaniment] in the air [Circ: Location; spatial].

“Why, indeed? [Verbiage]” said [Pr: Verbal] a Butterfly [Sayer], who [Actor] was fluttering [Pr: Material] about after a sunbeam [Circ: Location; temporal].

“Why, indeed? [Verbiage]” whispered [Pr: Verbal] a Daisy [Sayer] to his neighbor [Recipient], in a soft, low voice [Circ: Manner].

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“He is weeping for a red rose,” [Verbiage] said [Pr: Verbal] the Nightingale [Sayer].

--- He [Behaver] is weeping [Pr: Behavioral] for a red rose [Circ: Purpose], “For a red rose? [Circ: Purpose] they [Sayer] cried [Pr: Verbal]; “how very ridiculous!” [Verbiage] and the little Lizard [Behaver], who [Carrier] was [Pr: Relational; attributive] something of a cynic [Attribute], laughed [Pr: Behavioral] outright [Circ: Manner].

But the Nightingale [Senser] understood [Pr: Mental] the secret of the Student’s sorrow [Phenomenon], and she [Actor] sat [Pr: Material] silent [Circ: Manner] in the oak-tree [Circ: Location; spatial], and thought [Pr: Mental] about the mystery of Love [Phenomenon].

... “Give me a red rose,” [Verbiage] she [Sayer] cried [Pr: Verbal], “and I [Behaver] will sing [Pr: Behavioral] you [Recipient] my sweetest song [Range].” But the Tree [Actor] shook [Pr: Material] its head [Goal].

... “Give me a red rose,” [Verbiage] she [Sayer] cried [Pr: Verbal], “and I [Behaver] will sing [Pr: Behavioral] you [Recipient] my sweetest song [Range].” But the Tree [Actor] shook [Pr: Material] its head [Goal].

“My roses [Carrier] are [Pr: Relational; attributive] yellow [Attribute],’ it [Sayer] answered [Pr: Verbal]; “as yellow as the hair of the mer-maiden [Circ: Role] who [Actor] sits [Pr: Material] upon an amber throne [Circ: Location; spatial], and yellower than the daffodil [Range] that [Actor] blooms [Pr: Material] in the meadow [Circ: Location; spatial] before [Circ: Location; temporal] the mower [Actor] comes [Pr: Material] with his scythe [Circ: Location; temporal].”

Accompaniment] {Verbiage}. But go [Pr: Material] to my brother [Range] who [Actor] grows [Pr: Material] beneath the Student's window [Circ: Location; spatial], and perhaps he [Actor] will give [Pr: Material] you [Receiver] what you want [Range]."

... "One red rose is all I want [verbiage]," cried [Pr: Verbal] the Nightingale [Sayer], "only one red rose! Is there [Pr: Existential] no way [Existent] by which I [Actor] can get [Pr: Material] it [Target]?"

"There is [Pr: Existential] a way [Existent]," answered [Pr: Verbal] the Tree [Sayer]; "but it [Carrier] is [Pr: Relational; attributive] so terrible [Attribute] that I [Sayer] dare not tell [Pr: verbal] it [Verbiage] to you [Receiver] {Verbiage}."

"Tell it to me [Verbiage]," said [Pr: Verbal] the Nightingale [Sayer], "I [Carrier] am [Pr: Relational; attributive] not afraid [Attribute]."

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... "Be happy, [Verbiage]" cried [Pr: Verbal] the Nightingale [Sayer], "be happy; you shall have your rose [Verbiage]. I [Actor] will build [Pr: Material] it [Goal/scope] out of music by moonlight [Circ: Manner], and stain [Pr: Material] it [Goal] with my own heart's-blood [Circ: Accompaniment]. All that [Verbiage] I [Sayer] ask [Pr: Verbal] of you [Recipient] in return is that you [Token] will be [Pr: Relational; identifying] a true lover [Value], for Love [Carrier] is [Pr: Relational; attributive] wiser [Attribute] than Philosophy, though she [Carrier] is [Pr: Relational; attributive] wise [Attribute], and mightier [Attribute] than Power [Attribute], though he [Carrier] is [Pr: Relational; attributive] mighty [Attribute]. Flame-coloured [Attribute] are [Pr: Relational; attributive] his wings [Carrier], and coloured [Attribute] like flame [Circ: Manner] is [Circ: Relational; attributive] his body [Carrier]. His lips [Carrier] are [Pr: Relational; attributive] sweet [Attribute] as honey [Circ: Manner], and his breath [Carrier] is [Pr: Relational; attributive] like frankincense [Attribute]."

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And when the Moon [Actor] shone [Pr: Material] in the heavens [Circ: Location; spatial] the Nightingale [Actor] flew [Pr: Material] to the Rose-tree [Circ: Location; spatial], and set [Pr: Material] her breast [Range] against the thorn [Circ: Location; spatial]. All night long [Circ: Location; temporal] she [Behaver] sang [Pr: Behavioral] with her breast [Circ: Accompaniment] against the thorn [Range], and the cold, crystal Moon [Actor] leaned [Pr: Material] down [Circ: Location; spatial] and listened [Pr: Behavioral]. All night long [Circ: Location; temporal] she [Behaver] sang [Pr: Behavioral], and the thorn [Actor] went [Pr: Material] deeper and deeper [Circ: Manner] into her breast [Circ: Location; spatial], and her lifeblood [Actor] ebbed [Pr: Material] away from her [Range].

... But the Tree [Sayer] cried [Pr: verbal] to the Nightingale [Recipient] to press closer against the thorn [Verbiage]. "Press closer, little Nightingale, [Verbiage]" cried [Pr: Verbal] the Tree [Sayer], "or the Day [Actor] will come [Pr: Material] before [Circ: Location; temporal] the rose [Actor] is finished [Pr: Material] {Verbiage}."

So the Nightingale [Actor] pressed [Pr: Material] closer [Circ: Manner] against the thorn [Circ: Location; spatial], and louder and louder [Circ: Manner] grew [Pr: Material] her song [Actor], for she [Behaver] sang [Pr: Behavioral] of the birth of passion [Range] in the soul of a man and a maid [Circ: Location; spatial].

And a delicate flush of pink [Actor] came [Pr: Material] into the leaves [Circ: Location; spatial] of the rose [Range], like the flush [Circ: Manner] in the face of the bridegroom [Circ: Location; spatial] when he [Actor] kisses [Pr: Material] the lips [Range] of the bride

[Recipient]. But the thorn [Actor] had not yet reached [Pr: Material] her heart [Range], so the rose's heart [Actor] remained [Pr: Material] white [Range], for only a Nightingale's heart's blood [Actor] can crimson [Pr: Material] the heart of a rose [Range].

And the marvelous rose [Actor] became [Pr: Material] crimson [Range], like the rose of the eastern sky [Circ: Role/Manner]. Crimson [Carrier] was [Pr: Relational; attributive] the girdle of petals [Attribute], and crimson [Carrier] as a ruby [Circ: Manner] was [Pr: Relational; attributive] the heart [Attribute].

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But the Nightingale's voice [Actor] grew [Pr: Material] fainter [Range], and her little wings [Actor] began [Pr: Material] to beat [Range], and a film [Actor] came [Pr: Material] over her eyes [Circ: Location; spatial]. Fainter and fainter [Circ: Manner] grew [Pr: Material] her song [Actor], and she [Senser] felt [Pr: Mental] something choking her in her throat [Circ: Location; spatial] {Phenomenon}.

...“Look, look! [Verbiage]” cried [Pr: Verbal] the Tree [Sayer], “the rose [Carrier] is [Pr: Relational; attributive] finished [Attribute] now” [Verbiage]; but the Nightingale [Actor] made [Pr: Material] no answer [Range], for she [Actor] was lying [Pr: Material] dead [Range] in the long grass [Circ: Location; spatial], with the thorn [Circ: Accompaniment] in her heart [Circ: Location; spatial].

...The daughter of the Professor [Actor] was sitting [Pr: Material] in the doorway [Circ: Location; spatial] winding [Pr: Material] blue silk [Range] on a reel [Circ: Location; spatial], and her little dog [Actor] was lying [Pr: Material] at her feet [Circ: Location; spatial].

“You [Sayer] said [Pr: Verbal] that you [Actor] would dance [Pr: Material] with me [Circ: Accompaniment] if I [Actor] brought [Pr: Material] you [Recipient] a red rose [Range] {Verbiage},” cried [Pr: Verbal] the Student [Sayer]. “Here is [Pr: Existential] the reddest rose [Existent] in all the world [Circ: Location; spatial]. You [Actor] will wear [Pr: Material] it [range] to-night [Circ: Location; temporal] next your heart [Circ: Location; spatial], and as we [Actor] dance [Pr: Material] together [Range] it [Sayer] will tell [Pr: Verbal] you [Recipient] how I love you [Verbiage].”

But the girl [Actor] frowned [Pr: Material]...

So he [Actor] returned [Pr: Material] to his room [Circ: Location; spatial] and pulled [Pr: Material] out a great dusty book [Range], and began [Pr: Material] to read [Range].

FINDINGS

The transitivity analysis of this short story reveals three major processes that continually reappear throughout the text. The most frequently used processes are material, verbal and then relational. This reveals a more physical nature of actions as compared to psychological revelations and conscious unravelling. The most occurring material processes entail the recurrent pattern of actions that the actors undergo and carry out. Furthermore the verbal processes represent the oral interaction and dialogue that is conducted between the sayer and recipient. When the actor undergoes an action through material processes and also reveals his

state through verbal processes. Finally the relational actions create links between the actions as well as the actors along with certain attributes that are associated with them.

The comparative lack of mental and existential processes suggests that there is less psychological involvement in the short story. There is not much concern with the internal condition or insight of the characters. The assumptions made by the readers may thus be more objective in nature by formulating their own opinion based on the actions portrayed through material, verbal and relational processes. The few mental and existential processes form a vague outline leaving sufficient space for the reader to interpret on their own without being completely oblivious. The reader is aware of the actions and is also acquainted with the situation of the characters.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of transitivity is to connect the semantic and grammatical dots to extract the meaning through language stylistically. The transitivity analysis of Wilde's short story *The Nightingale and The Rose* show how the actions are performed through the use of material processes. We get a clearer idea from the verbal processes that describe the actions as well as revealing the situation and conditions. Furthermore this impact is strengthened by the relational processes. The physical actions are highlighted through these processes with give an outer view of the world portrayed in the story. This ensures the success of Oscar Wilde's signature approach of Aestheticism and Art for Art's sake. In this way, the reader indulges in the mystery of imagination in order to explore the art of the writer revealed through his writing.

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