



Original Article

Representation of Hunters in Kit Carson Short Story by Patricia Hill: A Transitivity Analysis

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Abstract:

This research analyzes the representation of hunter characters, namely Kit and Tom, in Patricia Hill's short story "Kit Carson." Transitivity analysis from M.A.K. Halliday's (2004) within perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) was employed with a qualitative descriptive approach. The results indicate that Material Processes are the most prominent (45.15%), portraying the hunters through physical actions that highlight their bravery, strength, resilience, and initiative. Verbal Processes rank second (30.97%), underscoring the importance of communication in their planning and interactions. Furthermore, Mental Processes (12.39%) and Relational Processes (9.73%) also contribute to depicting their inner thoughts, feelings, and identities. Kit emerges as a highly active leader (frequently acting as Actor and Sayer), supported by Tom, who is also communicative and collaborative. In essence, the hunters in this story are rich and diverse characters: not only physically tough, but also dynamic, astute in communication, judicious in action, responsible, and principled. Kit embodies bravery and dominance, while Tom demonstrates calmness and loyalty.

Keywords: Character Representation, Short story, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Transitivity Analysis

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Introduction

In literature, hunters are usually portrayed as brave, strong, and unyielding adventurers with many ways to survive, and sometimes also portrayed as antagonists. Many literary works portray the hunter as the main character, such as in story "Hunter in the Snow" by Tobias Wolff (1981), where Kenny, the hunter, is the center of moral and psychological conflict, with unstable emotions and a desire to control others. Similarly, in "The Bear" by William Faulkner (1942), the hunters symbolize the inner conflict between morality, identity, and the power of nature.

However, there are still rare studies that specifically examine how the character of the hunter is depicted. Previous studies explore other characterization such as that of Harry Potter ([Sari et.al., 2022](#)), the technology surviving humanity ([Tia, 2022](#)), a prince ([Sari et.al., 2019](#)), the characterization of Princess Islamic books for children ([Oriza and Masykuroh, 2018](#)), and family of tiny people living under the floorboards of an old English manor ([Rendadirza, 2020](#)).

Literary studies continue to develop along with efforts to understand the elements that make up literary works. One approach that is widely used to analyze language in texts is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). SFL is defined as the theory of choice in any act of communication ([Jaelani & Sujatna, 2014](#)). Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a development of traditional grammar developed by M. A. K. Halliday in 1985. This theory says that language is the main point, language is used to represent situations in life by individuals in social life to adopt culture, ways of thinking, and actions ([Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004](#)).

One of the realizations of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is transitivity analysis which is the main concept in SFL to analyze the lexicogrammatical realization of ideational functions in language. Transitivity analysis proposed by M.A.K Halliday and Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen in the book "An Introduction to Functional Grammar" becomes the focus of this research. In this study, transitivity analysis can be used to understand the function of language in literary works. For example, transitivity analysis can be used to understand how authors convey themes or characters through actions or events that occur in literary works and transitivity analysis can be used to understand how actions or events that occur in literary works are interrelated to form meaning.

[Emilia et.al., \(2017\)](#) assume that the grammatical system in Transitivity achieves the experiential meaning of the clause and becomes the resource for interpreting and expressing events, happenings, goings-on, Mental states, sayings, behaviors, and relations of different kinds. Transitivity analysis is employed as a yardstick to measure lexical differences in SFL. Within SFL, the transitivity system is a common means to analyze both isolated clauses and larger texts, and it is considered a fundamental tool for understanding how language is used to represent human experience. The relationship between SFL and transitivity analysis is evident in the fact that SFL provides a framework for analyzing language as a social semiotic system, and transitivity is a central element for representing the experiential function of language within this framework. Therefore, transitivity analysis is an integral part of SFL, allowing for a deeper understanding of how language is used to construe human experience and represent different types of processes and participants within a clause or a text.

According to [Halliday and Matthiessen \(2004\)](#), in Transitivity, elements are divided into six types of processes. These include: 1. Material Processes: These involve actions and events, with two participants typically called the Actor (the one who performs the action) and the Goal (the one affected by the action). 2. Mental Processes: These are processes of sensing, thinking, or perceiving something, involving the Senser (the one who senses) and the Phenomenon (the thing that is sensed). 3. Relational Processes: These processes relate to states of being, including identification and attribution. The participants here include the Carrier and Attribute in attributive processes, or the Token and Value in identifying processes. 4. Existential Processes: These processes indicate the existence of something, with the main participant being the Existent (the entity that exists). 5. Verbal Processes: These involve verbal actions such as saying or telling, with participants including the Sayer (the one who speaks), the

Receiver (the one who listens), and the Verbiage (the content of the speech). 6. Behavioral Processes: These processes pertain to human psychological and physical activities, with the main participant being the Behavior (the one who behaves).

There have been previous research investigating characters using transitivity analysis. Some of them are Boukari and Koussouhon (2018) who analyzes transitivity in the novel *The Voice* by Gabriel Okara using Halliday's SFL theory; Halima (2019) who analyzes the transitivity process in the short story *He* by Katherine Anne; Ahmad (2019) who analyzes the transitivity process in the short story *The Happy Prince* by Oscar Wilde. Some others deploy transitivity in literary works to explore significant issues in children's books such as gender representation (Hayat, 2018). The change of stereotypes and representation of women over the last decade in children's picture books in US (Paynter, 2011), and the violence and power in children's books (Diaz, 2012)

Through transitivity analysis we can analyze various texts such as news, speech texts, product labels, short stories, and so on. In this study, the researcher wants to apply transitivity to analyze a short story, especially the transitivity process in a short story entitled *Kit Carson* by Patricia Hill. This research aims to find out what transitivity processes are used to represent hunters in *Kit Carson's* short story by Patricia Hill using a transitivity analysis approach.

The selection of the story *Kit Carson* by Patricia Hill as the object of research cannot be separated from the richness of the narrative and the unique language style of the author. *Kit Carson* is a fairy tale written by Patricia Hill. It is one of the fairy tales that not only contains moral values suitable for children, but also contains deep lessons for adults. The story was first published in 1973. The story conveys important moral values, which show readers about struggle and not giving up easily under any circumstances.

Understanding these six types of processes is very important in discourse analysis because it helps us understand how meaning is formed and conveyed through language structures. Each type of process and its participants provides insight into the way actions, perceptions, relationships, existence, communication, and behavior are articulated in language.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research method, chosen because the data are analyzed and presented in the form of descriptive explanations supported by textual evidence. Qualitative research focuses on understanding meaning within social or textual phenomena, as stated by Creswell (2005), who explains that it seeks to comprehend how individuals or groups interpret particular situations. The object of this research is the transitivity process found in the *Kit Carson* short story written by Patricia Hill and illustrated by Edward Moetelmans, published by Oxford University Press in 1973. This short story belongs to the historical adventure genre and presents moral values related to struggle, perseverance, and survival in harsh conditions. The presence of various transitivity processes within its clauses makes the story suitable for linguistic analysis, particularly within the framework of systemic functional linguistics.

The data of this research consist of clauses taken from the *Kit Carson* short story that contain types of transitivity processes. The data source is the English text of the short story itself, which narrates the main character's efforts to survive the wilderness during winter, such as hunting for food and building temporary shelters. Data collection was conducted using document analysis, a method commonly applied in qualitative

research to examine written texts systematically. The researchers followed several steps: reading the short story thoroughly, identifying sentences containing transitivity processes, recording the relevant clauses, and listing them for further analysis. This structured procedure ensured that the collected data were relevant, organized, and aligned with the research objectives, enabling a focused examination of transitivity patterns in the narrative.

To ensure data validity, this study applies triangulation, specifically researcher triangulation, to enhance credibility and reduce interpretative bias. Two independent researchers—the supervising lecturer and the examining lecturer—analyzed the data separately. Their findings were then compared, and any differences were discussed to reach a shared interpretation. Data analysis followed the framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and classifying clauses based on transitivity types. The classified data were then presented in textual form and analyzed systematically. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the patterns identified through data reduction and presentation, providing a clear interpretation of transitivity processes in the short story.

Results

This study analyzes the types of transitivity processes found in Patricia Hill's short story *Kit Carson* using the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Transitivity analysis focuses on how language represents experience through different process types, participants, and circumstances. The analysis identifies six major processes: material, mental, verbal, relational, behavioral, and existential. Each process contributes differently to meaning construction and character representation. By examining clauses involving the main characters, Kit and Tom, the study reveals how linguistic choices reflect the ideology of hunting, leadership, and survival. The narrative predominantly emphasizes physical action, communication, and strategic thinking, which are central to the portrayal of hunters. Through repeated patterns of action verbs, speech verbs, and perception verbs, the text constructs hunters not merely as physically strong individuals but as socially and mentally engaged actors. The findings demonstrate that transitivity is a powerful tool for uncovering how literary characters are represented and how narratives prioritize certain values such as bravery, cooperation, and decision-making. This paragraph introduces the analytical foundation and justifies the use of SFL to interpret character dominance and thematic focus in the short story.

Material processes dominate the narrative and represent actions that involve physical movement, effort, and change. In *Kit Carson*, material clauses typically position Kit, Tom, or both as Actors performing concrete actions such as riding, buying supplies, hunting, shooting, and gathering men. These processes emphasize the physical demands of hunting life and construct the characters as active agents within the environment. Circumstances of time, place, and manner frequently accompany material processes, providing situational context and reinforcing realism. The dominance of material processes highlights the story's focus on survival, preparation, and confrontation with natural and human threats. Linguistically, this dominance constructs the hunter as a doer—someone whose identity is shaped by action rather than reflection alone. This is particularly important in adventure narratives, where physical agency symbolizes courage and competence.

Mental processes in the short story represent perception, desire, cognition, and emotional response. These processes involve a Senser (a conscious participant) and a Phenomenon (what is perceived, wanted, or felt). In Kit Carson, mental processes such as want, see, look, like, and listen reveal the internal states of the hunters. These clauses balance the physical dominance of material processes by showing that actions are guided by intention, observation, and evaluation. For instance, desires for food or skins indicate economic motivation, while perceptual processes such as seeing shapes or looking for tracks highlight strategic awareness. Mental processes humanize the hunters by portraying them as thinking and feeling individuals rather than mere action-driven figures. This representation adds psychological depth and realism to the characters. It also reinforces the idea that survival depends not only on strength but also on awareness and decision-making.

Verbal processes play a crucial role in constructing communication, leadership, and coordination among characters. These processes involve a Sayer, Verbiage, and sometimes a Receiver. In the story, verbal clauses such as said, shouted, asked, and talked are frequently used, particularly by Kit. Dialogue functions as a strategic tool for decision-making, warning others, sharing information, and organizing group action. The high frequency of verbal processes demonstrates that communication is as essential as physical action in hunting contexts. Linguistically, Kit's dominance as a Sayer reinforces his role as leader and authority figure. Verbal exchanges also create narrative tension and advance the plot, especially during moments of danger or planning. By integrating speech with action, the story presents hunters as socially intelligent individuals capable of cooperation and leadership.

Relational processes describe states of being, identity, and attributes rather than actions. These processes typically involve a Carrier and Attribute or a Token and Value. In Kit Carson, relational clauses describe hunger, fear, fatigue, friendship, and identity. Such clauses establish character traits and emotional conditions that contextualize actions. For example, expressions of fear or tiredness demonstrate vulnerability, while naming relationships strengthens social bonds in the narrative. Relational processes thus contribute to character depth by defining who the characters are and how they feel at certain points in the story. They prevent the hunters from being portrayed as one-dimensional heroes and instead present them as human figures with limitations. These processes also help build narrative coherence by linking internal states to subsequent actions..

Behavioral processes represent physiological or psychological behaviors that lie between material and mental processes. In this story, behavioral processes are rare, with only one instance identified (laughed quietly). Despite their limited frequency, behavioral processes add nuance by expressing spontaneous human reactions. Laughter, for example, conveys emotional relief and shared understanding between characters. Although not central to the narrative, behavioral processes subtly reinforce interpersonal relationships and emotional realism. Their scarcity suggests that the story prioritizes action, thought, and communication over bodily reactions. Nevertheless, the inclusion of even a single behavioral clause demonstrates the author's attention to human expression within tense situations.

Existential processes serve to introduce the existence or absence of entities and situations. In Kit Carson, only one existential clause is identified, indicating scarcity or limitation (there aren't many of us). This process highlights numerical disadvantage and heightens narrative tension. Existential clauses function to frame circumstances rather

than develop character. Their minimal presence suggests that the story focuses more on how characters act and respond than on merely stating conditions.

Overall process distribution shows a clear hierarchy among the six process types. Material processes are the most frequent, followed by verbal, mental, relational, behavioral, and existential processes. This distribution reflects the ideological orientation of the story toward action and survival supported by communication and cognition.

Participant-role analysis reveals that Kit is the most dominant hunter character. He frequently appears as Actor and Sayer, indicating leadership in both action and communication. His roles as Senser and Carrier further show psychological awareness and defined identity. Tom, by contrast, functions mainly as a supportive character, appearing more often as Sayer and Senser than Actor. This contrast constructs Kit as proactive and authoritative, while Tom is reflective and loyal.

In conclusion, transitivity analysis demonstrates that hunters in Kit Carson are represented as dynamic, strategic, and cooperative individuals. The dominance of material processes portrays physical strength and initiative, while verbal and mental processes emphasize communication and awareness. Relational processes humanize the characters by revealing emotional and identity-based states. Kit emerges as a strong leader, while Tom complements him as a thoughtful companion. Together, they embody teamwork and survival ethics. The study confirms that linguistic patterns play a crucial role in shaping literary character representation and narrative ideology.

Conclusion

This research aims to analyze the representation of hunters in Patricia Hill's short story "Kit Carson," using transitivity analysis based on M.A.K. Halliday's (2004) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory. Based on the data analysis and discussion that has been conducted, it can be concluded that Material Processes are the most dominant transitivity process in portraying the hunter characters, accounting for 45.15% of the total clauses analyzed. This indicates that Kit and Tom are frequently depicted through physical activities and direct interactions, such as "riding", "buying", "shooting", and "collecting". This dominance directly shapes their representation as brave, strong, unyielding, and adaptive individuals in facing challenges, while also highlighting their ability to initiate actions and influence their surroundings. Verbal Processes rank second with 30.97%, underscoring the vital role of communication and information delivery in the hunters' characterization. This reflects how they effectively interact through conversations. Mental Processes, at 12.39%, and Relational Processes, at 9.73%, also contribute to a deeper portrayal, describing their inner experiences, such as desires and perceptions, and defining their attributes and status as hunters.

Suggestion

This research has scrutinized the representation of hunters in storybooks using transitivity within the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics. The representation of hunters, as depicted through transitivity analysis, reveals that the hunter characters in the short story "Kit Carson" are not solely limited to conventional traits such as bravery and physical strength. They are also portrayed as dynamic, communicative, judicious in their actions, responsible, and principled in their relationships with nature and fellow humans. Kit embodies qualities of courage, strength, and dominance, while Tom displays characteristics of calmness, wisdom, and loyalty. The findings of this research

highlight that the portrayal of hunter characters is far more complex than conventional stereotypes. These findings can also serve as valuable discussion material in literature classes, providing a concrete linguistic framework for analyzing character development and understanding authorial intent. The transitivity analysis methodology applied in this study is highly relevant for integration into language and literature teaching curricula. This approach can be an effective tool for students to analyze language structure in texts, thereby improving their critical reading skills and understanding of how meaning is constructed. By focusing on process types and participant roles, students will gain a deeper appreciation for how authors shape characters and convey messages through grammatical choices.

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