

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology
of Egypt / Egyptology

SOCIAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN MIGRATION NARRATIVE: A
TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS OF MOHSIN HAMID'S EXIT WEST

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Rida Fatima, Safer Haider, Razia Majeed, Muhammad Adnan Akbar. Social Identity Construction in Migration Narrative: A Transitivity Analysis of Mohsin Hamid's Exit West -- PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology 18(18), 1346-1355. ISSN 1567-214x

Key Words: Protagonist, Transitivity, Identity Construction, Migration Narrative, Migration, Political Discourse, Linguistics.

ABSTRACT:

This paper investigates the application of Halliday's theory of transitivity in the construction of social identity in migration narrative of Exit West by Mohsin Hamid (2017). The article aims to explain and identify that how the main characters suffer from migration and represented through language used in Exit West. The findings hope to prove that linguistic choices in transitivity plays an important role in building up the identity issues present in the whole novel. From the long list of transitivity process there are three processes selected for this study whose frequency and percentage is find out by using Excel sheets to get data from the text. It will help to know about the frequent use of linguistic choices present in transitivity process from the text. The transitivity processes are analyzed in the light of Laclau and Mouffe's Political discourse theory (2010). The discussion of results will show how linguistic analysis together with observations about the text enables a better understanding of the migration phenomenon and identity issues with respect to the protagonists.

INTRODUCTION:

It is believed widely that those people who study and use a language are more interested in how they can do things with language, how they can make meanings and understand them through choices of words and grammatical structures. 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 novel "Exit West" is written by Mohsin Hamid in 2017. This is fourth novel by Mohsin Hamid which is shortlisted for 'Man Booker Prize'. Mohsin Hamid is a British Pakistani National born in Lahore Pakistan. He has spent a lot of time there and rest of the time in London, New York and California. He is an author of four major books which are almost translated in forty languages. He has got Pakistan's Sitara-e-Imtiaz/star of excellence. Recently he is shortlisted for 'DSC Prize for South Asian Literature; Exit West' (BC 2019).

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. This novel is again an elucidation of similarities and differences between the cultures and the major difference with the western world. Mohsin Hamid is a cosmopolitan writer who always tries to involve the two cultures in his writings. His themes also revolve around the two nations and cultures. This novel of Mohsin Hamid actually explores the themes of migration, relationship, love, violence, identity construction and humanity. The novel revolves around the story of two characters Nadia and Saeed where both of them start noticing each other in a class room, like it happens in most of the Middle Eastern countries. Saeed seems much impressed by Nadia who is already a migrant in that country and living an independent life. On the other hand, Saeed is living with his parents. The situation was calm until the army invaded in the city and imposing the curfew there. Saeed's mother was killed and he was left there with his father. Nadia came to help them in management of their home and they started living together. They both fell in love with each other. Soon the situation was not as calm or peaceful as it was before.

It was announced that the doors were getting opened for those who want to go to the other countries in order to save their lives for a good purpose. Saeed's father said them to leave for good. Saeed was not happy to leave his father although he moved with Nadia. They were close enough to each other but when they migrated from one door, they were not satisfied so they kept on moving from different doors in order to adjust in any country. Soon they were in Mykonos and Nadia was settled down but Saeed was not accepting the new environment. Nadia was already a migrant in the previous country so she was settled easily but these circumstances were totally a new experience for Saeed. Soon they started getting apart from one another. Their communication gap started increasing day by day. Saeed was not as much interested in her, as he was before and he got married to another girl. The migration and the prejudice faced by the people of host country have totally changed the attitude and temperament of Saeed towards Nadia. Soon he got involved in another girl and Nadia was alone living an independent life again. The analysis of "Exit West" is an authentic refugee problem that was faced in 2015. Mohsin Hamid was himself a migrant and he was well known of the fact that how the migrants feel prejudice in their host countries.

The doors in the novel are the symbolic representation and work as a stylistic device for the author and also seem paradoxical. The name of novel "Exit West" itself has two representations; Exit word is to escape and the West is specially chosen to explain these circumstances with respect to the relationship between East and West. Critical Stylistics will help in understanding the migration narrative in the novel by using the theory of political discourse by Laclau and Mouffes. It will help us to pick up those linguistic choices which portray the migration narrative, social context and change of situations and relationships in novel and which help us to analyze the opinion of author and reader.

Previous Researches Done on Exit West and Transitivity:

To understand the language of speakers and writers, Transitivity analysis has been widely used. 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. By using the 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. Therefore, the concept of transitivity has been used by a number of linguists to shed more light on the use of language in a literary text. As a pioneer and scholar in transitivity analysis, Halliday's study of William Golding's *The Inheritors* is an influential example. Carter and Stockwell describe it as "one of the groundbreaking analysis in stylistics" (1971, p. 19). In this analysis, Halliday points out how understanding grammar, especially transitivity, can help to 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). Following the method of transitivity analysis developed by Halliday, Yaghoobi (2009) makes a systemic analysis of news structures in two selected printed media, namely *Newsweek* and the *Kayhan International*. By identifying processes and the role of participants involved in those processes, Yaghoobi's study proves that the representation of the same news actors, Hizbullah and Israeli forces, by two different and ideologically opposed printed media, were opposite to each other. These transitivity analyses are just a few among many, but they are fundamental examples of how language patterns, particularly transitivity, can convey the meaning and ideology of a literary text. They also add further dimensions that have proved useful in stylistic analysis.

The functional grammar analysis of English helps readers understand human interactions in social contexts and can be used to uncover ideological meanings within them. In the next part, the focus will be on explaining the theory of transitivity. Mohammad Salahudheen (2017) in his article "Exit West of Mohsin Hamid: An Analysis in the Light of Global Migration Crisis" explores the theme of homelessness in the dramatic narrative of the novel which revolves around

the forced dislocation and refugee plight in the current era. The researcher starts his investigation from the historical survey of migration in which he includes the world wars, India and Pakistan Partition Crisis, and Civil in Middle East. Poverty and lack of economic resources led people to migrate to developed countries yet current study focuses on the forced migration due to terror attack. Researcher systematically explores the plight of people under forced migration in the narrative of the novel. Anum Aziz (2018), in her review of *Exit West* highlights the theme of identity, migration and change. Researcher further explores the feministic side of the novel from the character of Nadia who is struggling for her identity in the era of terror attack when existence is under question. Researcher also deciphers the magical realism in the narrative of the text, which makes the text symbolic. Researcher investigates the effect of migration and cultural changes that take place due to this migration. Researcher presents her perspective on the conflict between native and migrant, she further elaborates her point of view with the help of the text. Dr. KV Surendran (2018), is of the view in, "World of Porous Borders: Global refugee crisis and Transnationalism in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*", that the global refugee crisis and the phenomenon of transnationalism is one of the biggest problems which the world is facing these days. In *Exit West* the scenario of post 9/11 is highlighted and the matter of nation, nationality and purity tells us that how it leads to the death of hundreds and thousands of people. The transnational issue actually provides people with the solution of magical doors through which people can go anywhere in the world.

The doors are actually a symbol of porous borders which is analyzed in this research as Mohsin Hamid wrote this novel in order to put forward a hope for a better world without porous borders where people can live easily without any fear of nation and border. In an article on, "As if by Magical Realism: A Refugee Crisis in Fiction in Cultural Intertexts" Oana-Celia Gheorghiu (2018) has talked about the magical realism and post colonialism in the fictions written by Mohsin Hamid and Salman Rushdie. They both have special command on the phenomenon of migration and Mohsin Hamid himself is a migrant through many countries of the world. In an interview he said that while writing fiction he tried his best to write on the issue of migration because he can understand its merit and demerits very well. Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Exit West* whereas Salman Rushdie's *Imaginary Homeland* are about the migration of people and the story of their problems and the concept of otherness which is being faced by those migrants while migrating from their country to another. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has main focus on the situation of migration after 9/11 when people were migrating from one place to another in order to take an exit from the civil war and terrorist attacks making a threat to their lives. In this study the focus of the author is especially on *The Exit West* and the relationship between personal and the political life. It also discusses that how the concept of Otherness is created by using the trick of magical realism.

Actually, by using magical realism the author has portrayed the realistic view of modern life. Inderpret Kaur (2017) has discussed in, "Migration as a Difficult Experience - A Study of Mohsin Hamid's Literary Fictions" the two main novels of Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The main focus of the author of these novels is on the West. Because in the past few years

the attitude of West is not normal to the Muslims all over the world. The author has analyzed the hard hips of a migrant which he faces during and after migration. Through this work it is noted that there is a big geographical unsettlement in the fiction of Mohsin Hamid. It has further highlighted that why people have taken an exit from the western countries and why they have chosen the path of magical doors to know about which things were not provided by the West, which they wanted to have from these doors.

Theory Of 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. Our role relationships with other people and our attitudes towards others are often expressed by interpersonal meaning. This line of meaning in a clause comes from the clause serving as an exchange. We usually use language to facilitate an action or to demand an object and the expectant result is most generally gained verbally or in writing.

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 and a theme + rheme combination will give a precise illustration on the text orientation, its ideas and subject matters. 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 analyzed, 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 recognized 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. Transitivity generally refers to how meaning is represented in clauses; transitivity patterns can reveal the certain worldview “framed by the authorial ideology” in a literary text (Fowler, 1986, p. 138). 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. While Kress (1976, p. 169) states that transitivity is representation in language processes, Simpson asserts that transitivity refers generally to how meaning is represented in the clause (1993, p. 88). Hasan claims that transitivity: is concerned with a coding of the goings on: who does what in relation to whom/what, where, when, how, and why. Thus, the analysis is in terms of some process, its participants, and the circumstances pertinent to the process-participant configuration. (1988, p. 63) 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 according to whether they represent actions, speech, states of mind or states of being. Those are identified, 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 x did. 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 Behavioral processes that characterize the outer expression of inner working and reflect physiological and psychological behaviors such as breathing, laughing, sneezing. Behavioral 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 nominalized 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.

Adaptation of Transitivity Analysis in Exit West:

Theory of Critical stylistics contains textual-conceptual functions which are used to analyze the literary and non-literary texts. The tools include naming and describing, representation of actions and events, prioritizing etc. The tool of analysis used in this article is 'Representation of action, events and states which are explained in light of political discourse theory by Laclau and Mouffe. In this section we come to know that how events are created in novel and how the narrator makes sense of it through transitivity process by Halliday's (1976). It further tells us the views of author related to the events mentioned in the text which are static and cannot be changed. The process of transitivity is concerned with the transmission of world view and refers to how meaning is represented in a clause. It plays a key role in showing that how speakers encode mental picture of reality and how they account for the experience of world around them. The process of transitivity has four processes:

Material Process.

It includes actors and goals and actions performed by animate and inanimate things.

Existential Process.

It represents that something exists or occur.

Relational Process.

It indicates that some relationship connects between two participants without implying that one affects the other.

Behavioral Process.

It is concerned with physical and psychological behaviors. It lies between mental and material process.

Verbal Process.

It includes symbolic exchange of meaning.

Mental Process.

It contains sense of feeling, thinking and perceiving.

Out of these processes three processes are the center of attention which includes existential, behavioral and verbal process. The making of actions, events and states is done by the Halliday's process of transitivity (1994) which creates an impression of talking more than acting, events which are beyond the perception of human beings and those states which are more or less connected to the participants. While presenting a same event in different ways, there is not only a single way but many different ways. A reader can percept from different ways but there are static descriptions given by author which cannot be challenged or changed. The presentation of actions and events in a novel are subject to its ideological interpretation. The process which is selected by Mohsin Hamid also demonstrates that which sort of impact is created by the text on readers. Transitivity involves major and minor processes. The major ones are material, mental and relational processes whereas the minor process includes verbal, existential and behavioral. Existential and Relational process is related to the psychological involvement which is concerned with the internal condition or insight of characters. These relational and existential processes come under concepts of political discourse theory like Hegemony, Power and Hostility.

Table 1.1: Descriptive statistics of Transitivity process

Process	Frequency	Percentage
Existential	09	0.08
Relational	168	1.44
Behavioral	106	0.91

These concepts explain the actions, events and states in existential, behavioral and relational aspect. The phrase 'neither used chopsticks and fork' indicates the existential process which indicates the existing and occurrence of something. Saeed and Nadia were from the pure western culture and they had never used forks and knives before. But the country in which they were living, demands to use such things. People have to follow such rules otherwise they are considered as other creature like Saeed and Nadia who were considered as aliens. It is compulsory in order to maintain their existence. However, it transmits the identity of a person from what he or she is before or what they become after following the traditions of the other country that impose their culture upon the other people. In the city under war, 'people of particular sect were targeted' comes under the category of relational process which shows that hegemony and power were there at peak. In the city people were first asked about their sects and if the sect was their targeted one, then they killed the person at the spot and if the answer was no, they free that person.

People were started identifying on the basis of their religion and sect because they had an attribution towards their religion. It was not only a war of hatred and envy among the people and nation but it was a war of religion and sect also. Cruelty was everywhere in the city and it was just due to power that super powers were not ready for any kind of mercy and countless people were killed at their hands. A phrase from the text 'Bodies hanging from street lamps and billboards' is a behavioral process which shows the intensity of bloodshed and killing of people cruelly. It explains the relationship of physical and psychological behavior of people. The bodies were hanged in order to show the rate of their dead bodies. It was to show the higher authorities that how many people were murdered and they can count the number as the dead bodies were displayed on the boards. It was the heartlessness of the authority and fire of revenge from people, of an uncommitted mistake. Rules on dress, rules on beards and even rules on hairs were also must to be followed as given by the powerful nations.

When people migrate and leave their place, they totally lose their real identity and they have to adopt the rules of those who are dominant on the other side. Migration is actually a transformation from real to fake in order to survive. 'Body hanging in the air-unbearable smell' shows the inhuman behavior of the higher authorities because dead people were not buried but they were hanged from the walls and their bodies were producing bad smell. The clean environment of the city was full of dirt and smell and it was unbearable for people to even take breathe there. 'Agent demanded their money' was a relational process because people were there in miserable condition and the profit taking companies were very active. They started taking money for migration with high rates because they were well aware of the fact that people were facing trouble and whatever they demand from them, they will pay them. Everyone was in hurry to leave that place to go to some peaceful country. These events and actions are a true picture of hegemony, hostility and power not only political power but also authorities from other departments as well. These events represent the point of view of reader but there are clauses given by author which are static and cannot be changed. A clause 'We are all migrants through time' presents author's remark about migration. It cannot be challenged because it is a fact and human beings are migrants from the time they come to this world. Their migration starts when the time passes so rapidly and we humans are migrating through the time. In order to travel from one place to another for our personal dealings and jobs, we actually migrate. 'All over the world people were slipping away from where they had been' in author's view is a reality of time as people were leaving their places to find a better residence for them. They were slipping away from each other like Saeed and Nadia who were also going away from each other.

CONCLUSION:

Transitivity analysis gives more detailed and more nuanced support to the reader's responses to "Exit West". It provides linguistic evidence to support the interpretation of the story so readers, having been shown on what/who does what to whom/what in the protagonist world, are better equipped to decide on the story's meaning. The study of transitivity through the analysis of processes

and the participants who are involved in these processes shows that the main characters are suffering from the migration, loneliness, identity issues and hegemony. The main character Nadia and Saeed are just an example of what is happening to many migrants who usually live with their sorrows and worries which are sometimes ignored by us. Though the concept of migration can only be understood if one has gone through it or seen through naked eye. In conclusion, linguistically, I hope this study will contribute towards an understanding how linguistic analysis of a text can be used to interpret meanings in a literary text. In the social extent, this study aims to call people's awareness to the contemporary situation of "migration". Hopefully, in the future, the concept of "migration" is not just the creation of the title but a much more thing to consider on a serious note.

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