

Underpinning The Ideology in Graham Greene's Short Story

'A Chance for Mr. Lever'- A Transitivity Analysis

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Ideology is a set of assumptions, a belief system that a group of people share. There are different ways of encoding ideology and literature is one of them. Literature operates the tool of language to achieve desired effect. Infact as Simpson (1993:6) notes, 'language reproduces ideology', language has become a major method for reinforcing the existing ideology or to develop a new one. Hence the study of language is useful to uncover the hidden ideologies at work in a text. The present paper aims at identifying and explaining hidden ideology at work in Graham Greene's short story 'A Chance for Mr. Lever'. And it makes use of Halliday's Transitivity model to study the main character's personality, as linguistic choices helps in clarifying dominant ideologies. These ideologies are presented by processes used in the clauses.

Language is not merely a tool for communication but it is a social practice and a "most common form of social behaviour" (Fairclough 1982: 2). Language determines one's social relationships, and public interactions. For Halliday (1985: XIV), "a language is interpreted as a system of meanings, accompanied by forms through which the meanings are realised". Language is a code in which one will encode one's beliefs, identities, values and ideologies. Fairclough claims that language "is a material form of ideology and language is invested by ideology" (2001:73). Ideology can be defined as the everyday taken for granted collective set of assumptions and value systems that social groups share (Simpson 1993: 5). Moreover, ideologies are essential and basic social concepts that reflect the aims, significances and values of the social group (Wodak, 2001: 2).

As literature mirrors society, ideology becomes immortal in the written words. A literary world is a microcosm of how people act, feel and think and what they value as an individual or as a member of a community. Though Davies (2005) writes, "the ability to narrate has to be seen as a creative artifact and therefore not necessarily a representation...of actual events (99), a literary text is a powerful vehicle in the construction of social reality, a vehicle that shapes points of views through dominant ideologies and construct the realities of living and 'being' . In this sense, discourse is dialectically related to the socio-cultural and institutional contexts (Fairclough 2003). Fowler notes, "language provides names of categories, and so helps to set boundaries and

relationships and discourse allows these names to be spoken and written frequently, so contributing to the apparent reality and currency of categories (1986: 94). By using Halliday's theory of Transitivity, the present paper seeks to reveal the ideology that underpins Graham Greene's short story 'A Chance for Mr. Lever' (1935) from a semantic- grammatical viewpoint. By examining the transitivity choices made by the main character, as Simpson observes, "the transitivity profile embodied by a text is a generally useful indicator of character in prose fiction" (2004, 119), study is an attempt to acknowledge the role of linguistics analysis of a text not always as oriented towards uncovering examples of deviant language usage, but also a beneficiary tool for clarifying characteristics and meanings in a text be it a literary or non-literary text.

Numerous researchers have used transitivity analysis to reveal power-relations, ideologies, and attitude towards life as reflected in a text. A pioneering example of transitivity analysis is Halliday's article, "Linguistic Function and Literary Style: An inquiry into the Language of William Golding's *The Inheritor*" (1971). Halliday discusses how by choosing different processes, participants and circumstances, author presents the world as experienced by its major character, Lok. Another instance is Kennedy's analysis of a scene from Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent* (1982) revealing the distance and detachment between the actor and his actions. By choosing parts of body as actors, the author gives the impression that murderer is not responsible for what she was doing. Burton (1982) used transitivity to study the unequal power-relations between medical staff and patient and patient's helplessness in an extract from Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*. Similarly, Kies's (1992) "The uses of passivity: Suppressing agency in *Nineteen eighty-four*," analyzes linguistic features of the novel. Simpson and Montgomery (1995) used transitivity to analyse character in the article "Language, Literature and Film: the Stylistics of Bernard MacLaverty's *Cal*."

A brief understanding of the expression, "Transitivity", is imperative at the onset from the viewpoint of analysis. Transitivity is a part of ideational function of language. The ideational function of the clause is concerned with the "transmission of ideas." Its function is that of "representing 'processes' or 'experiences': actions, events, processes of consciousness and relations" (Halliday, 1985:53). The term "process" is used in an...extended sense, "to cover all phenomena...and anything that can be expressed by a verb: event, whether physical or not, state or relation" (Halliday 1976:159). Halliday views that "processes" expressed through language are the product of our conception of the world or point of view. He further notes, "our most powerful conception of reality is that it consists of "going-ons": of doing, happening, feeling, being. These

goings-on are sorted out in the semantic system of the language, and expressed through the grammar of the clause...clause evolved simultaneously in another grammatical function expressing the reflective, experiential aspect of meaning. This ...is the system of TRANSITIVITY. Transitivity specifies the different types of process that are recognized in the language and the structures by which they are expressed" (Halliday 1985:101).

The semantic processes expressed by clauses have potentially three components as follows:

- (1) The process itself, which will be expressed by the verb phrase in a clause.
- (2) The participants in the clause, which refer to the roles of entities that are directly involved in the process: the one that does, behaves or says, together with the passive one that is done to, said to, etc. The participants are not necessarily humans or even animate; the term "participant entities" would be more accurate (Halliday 1976:160). The participant entities are normally realized by noun phrases in the clause.
- (3) The circumstances associated with the process, which are typically expressed by adverbial and prepositional phrases. (Halliday 1985: 101-102)

With these three components of transitivity one can analyse the mind-set or worldview "framed by the authorial ideology" (Fowler 1986:138) in literary or non-literary texts. The first principle of a transitivity analysis is to uncover the principle "who or what does what to whom or what?" In simple terms it refers to the relationship between the action of an Actor and its effect upon the Goal. In order to get a clear picture of what is happening from the viewpoint of one's subjective reality involved in the story the following process is helpful:

- (1) Isolate the process *per se* and determine which participant (who or what) is doing each process.
- (2) Determine what *sorts* of process they are and which participant is engaged in which type of process
- (3) Determine who or what is *affected* or seems to be *affected* by each of these processes.

(Burton 1982: 202)

There are six types of processes—material processes, mental processes, relational processes, verbal processes, behavioural processes and existential processes.

3.1. Material Processes

These are the processes of doing in the physical world. Every material process has an obligatory ACTOR, who is the doer of the process and an optional GOAL which represents the person or

entity affected by the process. In addition to these two inherent participant roles, there is an extra element called Circumstance, which provides additional information on the “when, where, how and why” of the process. The circumstantial meaning is realized, not in noun phrases but either in adverbial phrases or in prepositional phrases. Circumstance expresses supplementary information, such as place, time, extent, matter, manner, duration, condition, means etc. For example:

John	slapped	Mary
Actor	Material process	Goal

John	slapped	Mary	Very hard
Actor	Material process	Goal	Circumstance: manner

3.2. Mental Processes

These processes account for processes of sensing and encode inner world of thinking. Mental processes are “internalized” processes in contrast to the “externalized” processes of doing and speaking (Simpson 1993:91). In mental processes SENSOR and PHENOMENON are potential participants. SENSOR is the doer of the process and PHENOMENON is the entity, person or idea which is sensed, thought or seen.

I	Can understand	Your problem
Sensor	Mental process	Phenomenon

I	heard	his voice
Sensor	Mental process	Phenomenon

3.3. Relational Processes

These are processes of being that signal the existence of a relationship between two participants. However these don’t suggest that one participant affects the other in any way.

The participant roles are called as CARRIER and ATTRIBUTE.

Jerry	Told	Mary	his problems
Sayer	Verbal process	Receiver	Verbiage
Mary	Is	Wise	

The president	is	John
Attribute	Relational process	Carrier
Carrier	Relational process	Attribute

3.4. Verbal Processes

Verbal processes include the verbs of saying. These are intermediate between material and mental processes as saying something is a physical action that reflects mental operations. Halliday writes, “the verbal process expresses the relationship between ideas constructed in human consciousness and the ideas enacted in the form of language” (1994: 107). The participant roles are SAYER, RECEIVER and VERBIAGE.

He	Said	“I’m exhausted”
Sayer	Verbal process	Verbiage

3.5. Behavioural Processes

Behavioural processes are the processes of physiological and psychological behaviour and these stand on the borderline between material and mental processes. Behavioural processes “represent outer manifestations of inner workings, the acting out of processes of consciousness and physiological states” (Halliday 1994: 107). The typical participant is BEHAVER.

We all	Laughed
Behaver	Behavioural process

John	is crying	Bitterly
Behaver	Behavioural process	Circumstance:manner

3.6.Existential Processes

Last process type is called existential processes. These processes express the mere existence of an entity without producing anything else of it. These processes are introduced by the subject THERE. The only participant is EXISTENT.

There was	a dog	on the road.
Existential process	Existent	Circumstance: place

There was	a little house	on the left side
Existential process	Existent	Circumstance:place

4.Transitivity Analysis of the Story

‘A Chance for Mr. Lever’ (1935) is a third person omniscient narrative. Analysis of the story reveals that evil lies latent in the minds of human beings and it only needs a favourable environment to manifest itself and then to go on growing till it becomes so formidable as to overwhelm and engulf whatever of good there may be in human beings. Both society and moral values regulate human behavior by sanctioning what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. When the external restraints of society and work are uplifted, we must meet the challenge and temptation of savage, reversion with our own innate strength. “But humans are not strong enough to resist their natural urges to follow the natural law of morals and ethics without any artificial power to enforce it” (Hobbes 1982: 223).

The protagonist of the story, ‘A Chance For Mr. Lever’, too fails in the challenge of staying morally upright in the midst of forest. He undergoes de-moralization i.e. a deterioration of moral motivation (Craig 2008). He sees morality and ethics as totem of ruined past. He feels that moral choices are ultimately insignificant. He does not want to sacrifice his self interest of making money just to stay morally upright. He falls prey to environment. He succumbs to deceit and dishonesty and intentionally commits forgery.

Precursory reading of the story seems to portray Mr. Lever as a helpless fellow pressurized by his circumstances to visit Africa in order to secure the signature of certain Mr. Davidson on a business contract to earn some commission money. On reaching Davidson's camp, Mr. Lever finds out that Davidson is dying a slow death due to malarial infection. And in the morning, Davidson is dead. 'The whole trip was a gamble' (Greene 1935: 220) so Mr. Lever couldn't afford to let go this last chance of making money, hence he forges Davidson's signature on business document and makes his trip a successful one on material plane but a total failure on spiritual plane.

Transitivity analysis of Mr. Lever's processes proves him to be an anarchist who though says, 'I'm too old' (Greene, 1935, 220) is ready to do anything. His only concern is his wife Emily and money. He follows the path of morals and honesty as long as he is in human society but the moment he steps in forest he starts responding to the call of darkness. For the sake of money, he performs the dishonest act, leaves the path of honesty and isn't ashamed of himself as no one watched him doing the wrong deed and 'his only fellow in the little stuffy tent wouldn't be troubled by Untruth in Advertising' (Greene 1935: 230).

The configuration of Mr. Lever's transitivity profile portrays him as an ACTOR of processes as material processes dominate other process types in the frequency of occurrence. For better understanding of the story, I have divided the story into two parts and named them as Village and Forest respectively to represent the changes and developments in Mr. Lever's thoughts and feelings.

Following table presents Mr. Lever's participation in processes:

Processes	Part I- Village	Part II- Forest	Total
Material	114	75	189
Mental	62	62	124
Relational	34	23	57
Verbal	39	04	43
Behavioural	06	01	07
Total			420

In part I – Village, there is a clear gap between material and mental processes occurrence frequency. Here Mr. Lever seems to be a man of action. However all his actions are simple routine tasks, usual tasks a white man performs in African colony and which don't require any thinking process to proceed. For instance,

Actor	Process:Material	Beneficiary	Goal	Range
(He)	Opened		his suitcase	
He	took out		his wife's photograph	
He	Wiped		his damp hands	With a handkerchief
He	must shake		hands	With cheif
(He)	Give	Them	salts and aspirin	
(He)	paint		their sores	with iodine

Mr. Lever appears to be a well behaved and civilized human being. He helps the local niggers. He find them “friendly, interested, amused” (Greene 1935: 219). Mr. Lever does not carry the insane idea of superiority and thus exhibits what morality teaches us, to be humble and loving. Man alone, as a free being, responsible for his actions and attitudes, for his will and striving, his love and hatred, his joys and sorrow and his super-actual basic attitudes, can be morally good or bad. For, far above his cultural accomplishments, rises the importance of the man's own being: a personality radiating moral values, a man who is humble, pure, truthful, honest and loving (Hildebrand 1950: 1).

Study of the mental and verbal processes reveal that his main concern is to convince the village chief to send some carriers with him to find Davidson as early as possible. He doesn't want a minute's delay. As all his hopes lie in one thing, finding Davidson and getting his signature on document. Mr. Lever is God fearing man. He prays to God for helping him in his task and to show him right path. First part of the story exposes Mr. Lever's aim in visiting Africa at such an old age. Part II- Forest reveals how Mr. Lever achieves his aim. Here material (75) and mental (62) processes are almost equal in the frequency of occurrence pointing to the fact that actions are planned. The good, moral self of Mr. Lever guides his journey till he reaches the camp of

Davidson. When Mr. Lever sees Davidson's condition everything turns upside down. Davidson has caught malaria infection and can die at any moment.

Mental processes deal with the moral dilemma that arises in the mind of Mr. Lever. Up to now, he has followed the path of morals and honesty and has prayed to God for not letting Davidson die. But watching Davidson dying, Mr. Lever becomes a rebel. It is hard to do the right thing when that means sacrificing one's own self-interest and to resist temptation to do wrong when desire is strong and the belief that ultimately it does not matter what you choose or do is apt to sap one's moral strength and so undermine one's moral life (Craig 2008). To him, now all prayers and morals are of no use. With every black vomit coming out of Davidson's mouth, Mr. Lever's last chance was slipping from his hands. "Moralities were what enabled a man to live happily and successfully with fellows but Mr. Lever wasn't happy and he wasn't successful"(Greene 1935: 230). Mr. Lever now sees morality and moral values mere jailors that imprison our identity and hinders action. He feels morality is a mere trap, a weakness, a delusion and completely superfluous. And he decides to convert his last chance into a successful one. Morals and ethics teach us to be honest even when nobody is monitoring our actions but to Mr. Lever honesty is a mere palpable design and he decides to make a plunge into the realm of dishonesty. He knows that being honest will not pay him anything now, it is only by being dishonest and through deceit, he can have what he want. "He was lost and he was set free" (Greene 1935: 230). And further narrator comments on Mr. Lever's change of personality, "he was freed from what had held him back through a long pedantic career, the fear of some conscious fate that notes the dishonesty...now he said Boo to that goose" (Greene 1935: 231). He carefully copies Davidson's signature with Davidson's pen and feels a great relief.

The transitivity tool helps to decode the particular worldview or ideological stance of author. As Fowler notes, "linguistic codes do not reflect reality neutrally; they interpret, organize, and classify the subjects of discourse. They embody theories of how the world is arranged: world-views or ideologies (1986: 27). The outward journey of finding Davidson becomes an inward journey to exhibit the darkness lying below the mask of humanity. As long as one is in the protection of societal laws, one's evil nature remains suppressed. Once out of civil rules, this nature shows up and it requires great strength to combat it. Mr. Lever is civilized, moralist and God fearing human till he is in village. He believes in the power of prayer, "he thought: Prayer. I'll pray tonight, that's the kind of thing a fellow gives up, but it pays, there's something in it" (Greene 1935: 223). However the temptation of forest is proves to be too strong for him. Now "prayers

were out of place in the dead drab forest, they simply didn't come" (Greene 1935: 228). Mr. Lever's selfish nature has better of him. He remains unsuccessful in keeping his morality intact and falls way too easily to the call of darkness, dishonesty.

To sum up, we can safely say that though transitivity analysis is not the whole literary analysis but it does serve a deeper purpose than mere studying foregrounding and style patterns. As investigated in the text, by studying process types and participant functions, transitivity offers firm foundation for the interpretation of a text. It is fruitful to uncover the underlying meanings, motives, beliefs and ideologies in a text. Transitivity analysis promotes a deep and clear understanding of a text as in present study it helped in exposing the hypocrisy of main character as he wastes his last chance by becoming a slave to his base instinct of greediness.

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