

**Linguistic Patterns of Contradiction A Transitivity Analysis of The Scarlet Letter Ayat
Saad Abdulameer^{1*}, Shaymaa Abid Abdulameer²**

¹Department of English language, Faculty of Education, University of Kerbala

²University of Kerbala, College of Education for Humanities, loan Services to
the University of Alameed, College of Basic English for Girls

Email: ^{1*}ayat.saad@s.uokerbala.edu.iq, ²shayma.a@uokerbala.edu.iq

Abstract

This study employs transitivity theory to explore how Nathaniel Hawthorne uses linguistic structures to highlight themes of contradiction in *The Scarlet Letter*. By adopting Halliday and Matthiessen's transitivity framework, the analysis identifies the predominant use of relational, material, and mental processes, revealing how these linguistic choices shape readers' interpretations and enhance thematic depth. The findings indicate that relational processes are most dominant, reflecting characters' societal positions and internal conflicts, while verbal and behavioral processes are less emphasized, suggesting a nuanced approach to depicting contradiction. This linguistic focus offers new insights into Hawthorne's narrative technique and its thematic implications, contributing to both literary and linguistic fields.

Keywords: the scarlet letter, transitivity, linguistic analysis, contradiction, hawthorne

Introduction

The concept of contradiction is defined differently by various scholars. It is identified by (Martin & Ringham, 2000) as a result of one of the opposing terms being negated and nonexistent. For instance, the term non-life contradicts the term life, which implies death, with the latter being the opposite term in the semantic category of existence. As pointed out by (Malmkjær, 2002) contradiction is a relationship that may occur between sentences. For instance:

1. "Anyone dead is not dead / Anyone alive is not alive."

Importantly, (Crystal, 2008) maintains that contradiction is a sentence that cannot be true because of its form and meaning. For instance:

2. "This table is more than 10 feet long, but it is less than 10 feet long."

However, some scholars explain the same contradiction meaning, but they utilize different terminologies. As for (Crystal, 1987) he mentions that negation is a process expressing the denial or contradiction of some or all of the meaning of a sentence. Also, he uses paradox as an apparent contradiction, which is a statement that is contradictory which forces the search for a deeper level of meaning. Meanwhile, (Spears, 1998) identifies contradiction in terms of idioms. He identifies contradiction as a statement containing a seeming contradiction. Also, he exemplifies the following idiom:

3. "A straight-talking politician" as a contradiction.

Accordingly, (Finch, 2000) argues that incompatibility is a sense relation which exists between words where the choice of one excludes the other. He exemplified this by stating that it is a contradiction to say this instrument is a piano and a violin since the sense of piano excludes that of violin.

Review of Related Literature

1. Transitivity Transitivity is “a system of the clause, affecting not only the verb serving as Process but also participants and circumstances.” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) The clause serves as the primary processing unit inside the lexicogrammar because it is where various meanings are mapped into an interconnected grammatical structure...” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) categorize six processes generating the structure of transitivity: material, mental, verbal, existential, relational, and behavioural, wherein the verb phrase is used to help identify the process form. Additionally, the transitivity system offers lexicogrammatical resources “for construing a quantum of change in the flow of events as a figure – as a configuration of elements centred on a process.” These processes are:

- a. Material clause:** “construes a quantum of change in the flow of events as taking place through some input of energy.” Material process describes physical actions and events. It comprises the actor, goal, and patient.
- b. Mental clause:** “construes a quantum of change in the flow of events taking place in our own consciousness.” Hence, it refers to “clauses of sensing.” The sensor and the phenomenon are participants in the mental process
- c. Rational clauses:** “serve to characterize and to identify” The fundamental characteristics of relational clauses come from the nature of a configuration of being.
- d. Behavioural:** These are physiological and psychological processes that are characteristically human, such as breathing, coughing, smiling, and dreaming. Due to their lack of clearly defined qualities, they stand out the least of the six process types. They require one participant, i.e., the participant who is “behaving,” categorized as Behavior.
- e. Verbal clauses:** saying clauses are a valuable resource in many different types of discourse. In addition, the clauses also facilitate the implementation of “the creation of narrative by making it possible to set up dialogic passages.” Also, they involve the sayer and the receive
- f. Existence clauses:** “represent that something exists or happens.” The theme is simply a characteristic that existence (there), allowing the addressee to be ready for new information.

In summary, (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) explain that transitivity is typically analyzed in terms of a configuration of three different types of components : a. A process that extends over time.

- b. The participants are taking part in the process.
- c. Circumstances relating to the process.

Hence, the process is the action or event being described, while the participants are the people or things involved in the action. The circumstances are the additional details that provide context for the action, such as time, place, and manner. The semantic categories of process, participant, and circumstance provide the most comprehensive explanation of how things from people’s everyday experience of the world are perceived as linguistic structures. Hence,

language reveals how people perceive and communicate their experiences. Process, participant, and circumstance categories offer a framework for understanding this (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014)

Methodology

The current research utilized the qualitative research method. A qualitative approach to research “aims to understand how individuals make meaning of their social world.” The social interaction of people with the world around them establishes this social world (Biber, 2010). This research investigates the concept of contradiction linguistically in *The Scarlet Letter*. Additionally, the current research utilized numbers and frequencies to support, verify, and generalize the findings of the current research. Thus, (Maxwell, 2010) states “there are legitimate and valuable uses of numbers even in purely qualitative research.”

The original novel served as the basis for the data collection process used in the current study. First, the researcher read the novel and then found about (4) texts that served as the data for the present research. Later, based on the below-mentioned specific criteria, she downsized these texts into (4) chapters of the novel. The selected data include texts from the novel *The Scarlet Letter*; in which the concept of contradiction is linguistically examined. The texts of this American novel took place in 1850, precisely in the mid-nineteenth century. The researcher adopted a copy of the 1988 edition. It was written by the American author Nathaniel Hawthorne. Consequently, the event occurred in Boston.

The following criteria are considered:

1. to analyze the linguistic features of the texts to reveal the concept of contradiction in *The Scarlet Letter*.
2. to reach an interpretation of how speech takes place in society. Hence, studies of various discourse forms like novels become increasingly popular recently. Besides, these studies show that “storytelling not only has different structural categories in different cultures, but also puts specific constraints on who can tell what to who under what circumstances” (van Dijk, 1983, p. 4).
3. the style of the novel is characterized and written in a way that highlights the concept of contradiction. Hawthorne uses various linguistic devices to draw attention to the contradiction in puritan society. The novel establishes contradiction in a battle between good vs. evil, feelings vs. mind, speech vs. action, and fate vs. will.

Regarding the analysis model, the researcher adopted (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) transitivity to analyze the concept of contradiction in *The Scarlet Letter*.

A. Data Analysis 1. The Prison Door

“This rose-bush, by a strange chance, has been kept alive in history; but whether it had merely survived out of the stern old wilderness, so long after the fall of the gigantic pines and oaks that originally overshadowed it, or whether, as there is far authority for believing, it had sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson as she entered the prison-door, we shall not take upon us to determine. Finding it so directly on the threshold of our narrative, which is now about to issue from that inauspicious portal, we could hardly do otherwise than pluck one of its flowers, and present it to the reader. It may serve, let us hope, to symbolize some

sweet moral blossom that may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow” (p.44)

2. Transitivity There is a relational process in “*This rose-bush has been kept alive*”. The verb phrase

“*has been kept alive*” joins the subject “This rose-bush” which is the Carrier (i.e., the entity that is being described). The modal verb “has been” is also present in this sentence to support the relational process. The action of keeping the rose-bush alive has been completed, according to the modal verb “has been.” This implies that the rose bush has evolved into a representation of strength and resiliency and that its ability to survive proves the impact of these qualities.

Additionally, there is an existential process in this sentence: “*it had merely survived out of the stern old wilderness.*” Existential processes refer to the existence of something rather than an action that an agent carries out. This process is employed to refer to the location of the rose-bush amid the stern, old wilderness. The rose-bush is referred to as “*it*” which is the Existent, that it highlights the resilience and tenacity of the rose-bush, which has managed to survive in a complex and unforgiving environment. The “*stern old wilderness*” is the location where the rose-bush is. The novel establishes the rose-bush as a representation of hope. The rose-bush is believed to have survived in the harsh, old wilderness, indicating that despite numerous difficulties, it has continued to thrive.

Contradiction can also be interpreted as a conflict between social order and individual freedom. Ann Hutchinson ended up in jail because of her religious convictions, which went against the prevailing order at the time. In comparison, the rose-bush stands for the ability of the person to have hope and to be resilient.

B. The Market Place “as befitted a people among whom religion and law were almost identical, and in whose character both were so thoroughly interfused, that the mildest and severest acts of public discipline were alike made venerable and awful. Meagre, indeed, and cold, was the sympathy that a transgressor might look for, from such bystanders, at the scaffold. On the other hand, a penalty which, in our days, would infer a degree of mocking infamy and ridicule, might then be invested with almost as stern a dignity as the punishment of death itself”

1. Transitivity

There are relational processes in “religion and law were almost identical”, “acts of public discipline were alike made venerable and awful” and “bystanders did not sympathize with the transgressor.” Firstly, “were” joins “religion and law”, which is the carrier, with “almost identical.” Stated differently, it suggests that there are striking similarities between religion and the law. Religion and law were closely related in puritan societies, as this relational process makes clear. So, with this verb, a state of being is indicated. Secondly, “were” joins “acts of public” which is the carrier, with “alike”. It implies that it ties together two entities and gives one of them characteristics. In this instance, public discipline actions are being described as both venerable and

awful. Thirdly, “did” joins bystanders, which is the attribute (the feature being described), with the transgressor. When referring to the bystanders' perceived act of sympathy, the verb “did” is employed. Thus, the assertion is that those who observed the offense did not show sympathy for the offender.

Furthermore, there is a mental transitivity in “*the sympathy that a transgressor might look for was meagre, indeed, and cold*”. In this phrase, the participant is the transgressor, i.e., the sener. The mental transitivity process explains the transgressor's emotional experience. The transgressor hopes for sympathy, but he or she finds it to be merged and cold. This implies that the offender is experiencing feelings of rejection and loneliness.

Here, the use of relational and mental transitivity contributes to the impression of the puritan society as a close together strictly governed group.

As a result, this idea emphasizes the conflict between the virtues of compassion and order. It implies that balancing these two values is complex and that any attempt to do so will probably lead to a particular sort of contradiction.

C. The Recognition

“It was better to stand thus, with so many betwixt him and her, than to greet him face to face--they two alone. She fled for refuge, as it were, to the public exposure, and dreaded the moment when its protection should be withdrawn from her”

1. Transitivity

There is a relational process in “*with so many betwixt him and her*”. In this relational process, no action or event is mentioned directly, but the preposition “with” expresses a relationship between two participants, him and her, and both of them are identifier.

Also, there is a material process in “*than to greet him face to face--they two alone*” wherein a patient (him) and an agent (they) are involved in an action (greet). The adverbial phrase “face to face” alters how the activity occurs. Here, the participant is him, the actor.

Furthermore, there is a mental process in “*and dreaded the moment when its protection should be withdrawn from her*”. Thus, the character's internal feeling, “dreaded”, towards an occurrence “*the moment*” and its possible outcomes, “*protection withdrawn,*” is described in this mental process. The participant is her, the sayer.

Combining these sentences gives a vivid and detailed account of the character's feelings, ideas, and deeds. The contrasting sentences “*better to stand*” and “*flee for refuge*” show the character's internal conflict and anxiety.

However, the “so many” surrounding the character serve as a barrier between Hester and the individual, giving her a sense of safety while acting as a prison. Nevertheless, the crowd also stands for the reason she feels ashamed and might be rejected. This contradiction highlights how social norms have two sides and can be both a source of freedom and confinement.

D. The Interview

“Thou wilt not reveal his name? Not the less he is mine,” resumed he, with a look of confidence, as if destiny were at one with him. “He bears no letter of infamy wrought into his garment, as thou dost, but I shall read it on his heart. Yet fear not for him! Think not that I shall interfere with Heaven’s own method of retribution, or, to my own loss, betray him to the gripe of human law. Neither do thou imagine that I shall contrive aught against his life; no, nor against his fame, if as I judge, he be a man of fair repute. Let him live! Let him hide himself in outward honour, if he may! Not the less he shall be mine! ” “Thy acts are like mercy,” said Hester, bewildered and appalled; “but thy words interpret thee as a terror!”

1. Transitivity

This particular chapter of *The Scarlet Letter* illustrates a number of transitivity processes that support the manipulation and intense conflict in the text. Below is an explanation of the various processes that are taking place. There is a material process in “*Thou wilt not reveal his name?*” The participant is his name, the goal. In “*He bears no letter of infamy*” the participant is He, the actor, and in “*Let him live! Let him hide himself in outward honour*” the participant is him, the actor. However, these material processes in the clauses above emphasize actions and their potential consequences.

Moreover, there is a mental process in “*Think not that I shall.*” The participant is I, the phenomenon, and in “*said Hester, bewildered and appalled*” the participant Hester is the senser. These mental processes highlight power dynamics and emotional connections.

Lastly, an existential process appears in “*shall be mine*” and the participant is mine, the existent. This process emphasizes Dimmesdale’s ownership claim by referring to a state or condition without identifying a specific action.

As a result, by utilizing this combination of transitivity processes, Dimmesdale is attempting to control the situation and force emotional manipulation on Hester. Gaining a deeper understanding of these processes offers a better understanding of the power dynamics of the novel and the speaker’s manipulative strategies.

Eventually, the given text contains contradiction, which conveys contradictory meanings in the speaker’s words and actions. This appears in the notion of hypocrisy vs morality, in which Dimmesdale portrays himself as a morally pure person, criticizing wrongdoing while keeping his own sin hidden. This duplicity questions the true essence of morality in puritan society and stands contrary to his supposed authority.

Results and Discussion

1. Transitivity

The frequency and percentage of occurrence of the types of transitivity processes in all texts are displayed in Table (1). Table 1 exhibits that relational process is the dominant type of

transitivity processes. This requires the following possible considerations since it is utilized 5 times out of 12(41.66%). This might be contributed to the meaning since *The Scarlet Letter* concentrates on social structures and power relations. Relational processes successfully show the interactions between characters such as Hester and Dimmesdale, Chillingworth and Dimmesdale, and Hester and Pearl, emphasizing power conflicts and restrictions in the community.

Moreover, Table 1 demonstrates that mental process is utilized 3 times out of 12 (25%). While definitive assertions require specific investigation, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* involves mental processes constantly; a possible interpretation is that the characters, particularly Hester and Dimmesdale, deal with guilt, shame, love, and religious doubt. Mental processes efficiently depict these internal conflicts and reveal their complicated feelings. Such as: "*She must needs be the type of shame.*" Here, the writer depicts Hester's internal feelings.

For material and existential, they utilized 2 times out of 12 (16.66%) This requires the following possible considerations: First, Characters' interior states frequently materialize as actions and reactions. Describing these feelings and conflicts through tangible processes can reveal their psychological depth. Such as: when the writer describes the meeting between Hester and Chillingworth "It was better to stand thus, with so many betwixt him and her, than to greet him face to face--they two alone." Second, Seemingly, the novel employs powerful symbols such as *The Scarlet Letter*, the scaffold, and the forest, each expressing a different element of existence. Examining how characters perceive, experience, and interact with these symbols might reveal insights into their existence and role in the world. Finally, the writer does not make use of verbal and behavioral processes. Rather than relying on a verbal and behavioral transitivity process, the writer uses various established processes to highlight character actions, inner struggles, and underlying motivations. As a result, these processes provide more comprehensive insights regarding how Hawthorne utilizes language to question social norms and investigate the varied nature of human experience.

Table 1: Transitivity Analysis

No.	Transitivity Processes	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Relational	5	41.66%
2.	Mental	3	25%
3.	Material	2	16.66%
4.	Existential	2	16.66%
5.	Verbal	0	0%
6.	Behavioral	0	0%
Total		12	100%

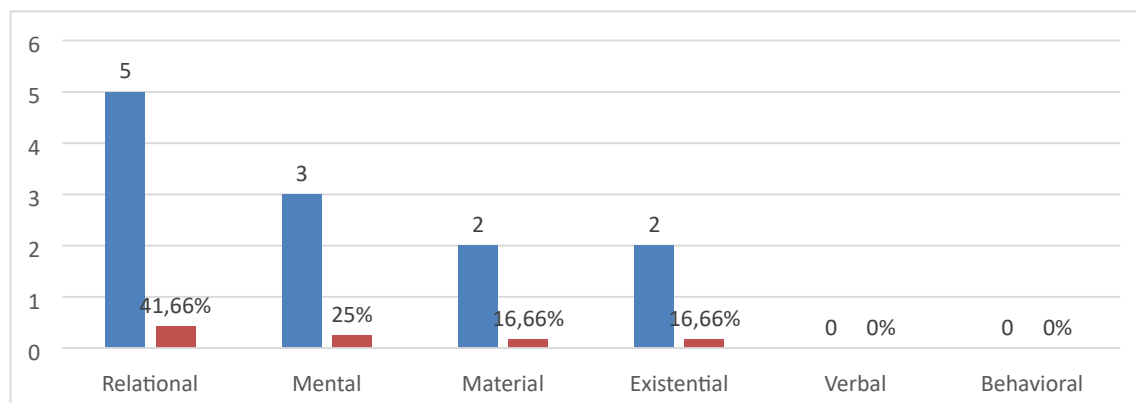


Figure 1 : Transitivity Analysis

Conclusion

The research has reached the following results based on the qualitative analysis of the selected data:

1. Not all transitivity processes are necessary for the writer to use in his writing. Thus, particular processes (such as: relational, material and mental) are utilized in *The Scarlet Letter* to accomplish specific goals and influence the reader's experience. Accordingly, the analysis reveals that hypothesis No.1 is verified because the writer does not utilize all the types of transitivity processes.
2. Not in line with expectations, the findings have shown that the relational process is the dominant type of transitivity process. Given that relational processes elucidate the social positions of characters. The difference between public perception and individual experiences is made clear by examining how Hester is described as an "adulteress". Hence, hypothesis No.2 is refuted.
3. The analysis indicates that the verbal and behavioral transitivity process are not utilized by the writer because, first, contradiction is not always the result of verbal processes, even if they might be used to communicate contradicting statements. It is the words being said, not the act of telling them, second, behavioral process, which concentrates on psychological elements, might not have applied to the writer's particular contradiction analysis. Thus, hypothesis No. 3 is refuted.

Originality Statement

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author[s] declare that this article was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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