

## **Transitivity Analysis on ‘The Clay Marble’ Novel by Minfong Ho**

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### ***Abstract***

The need to study language use in literary texts arises due to linguistic complexity, writers’ linguistic choices and subjective understanding of the contextual meaning conveyed by writers. By using Halliday’s (1994) transitivity system, this study analysed ‘The Clay Marble’ novel which highlights the Cambodian Civil War and its implications through the representation of events and characters. By looking at the transitivity processes through the clausal structures and word choices, findings showed that all six processes were employed with material process (69 clauses) used most, followed by relational (42 clauses) and mental (31 clauses) process. Material and relational process is dominantly used to represent themes such as the effects of war, community life among refugees as well as the growth and character development of young refugees during the war. Therefore, transitivity analysis on literary texts helps to uncover writer’s language use and the contextual meaning conveyed through the writer’s linguistic choices.

**Keywords:** Literary Texts, Transitivity Analysis, Contextual Meaning, Writers’ Linguistic Choices, Language Use

## **1. Introduction**

For centuries, literary texts exist and have been transitioning across time and society where ideas and concepts incorporated in modern literary texts have developed to be more socially influenced (Johnson, 2014). Over the past two centuries, novels have become the dominant form of literary texts due to their relevance in the socio-economic realities that reflect those of its readers (Abbas, 2012). Consequently, the study on literary texts increased in its prevalence as the research on language use in literary works can never be overemphasised. A substantial amount of effort has been placed in the linguistic analysis of novels to establish the basis of interpretation of literary texts through the text itself (Abbas, 2012).

The study on the use of language in literary texts have become pertinent as language itself is a social phenomenon used to convey experiential meanings of the humans' inner and outer world (Ammara, Anjum & Javed, 2019). Particularly, language in textual form is used as means to convey ideas and meaning to readers. It does not only demonstrate reality but also constructs reality as language functions ideationally to conceptualise the world and bring it into being linguistically (Alshami, 2019). Language shapes an individual's conceptual knowledge and directs thoughts (Klemfuss, Prinzmetal & Ivry, 2012). Looking into novels, writers' ideation are conveyed through their language use. Subsequently, a novel writer's language use shapes readers' conceptual knowledge through the selection of words and its arrangement in a sentence structure. This requires further studies as a writer's language use conveys experiential meaning through the novel's events and characters.

The significance of literary works can be seen in the use of literature texts in Malaysian secondary schools under the English language subject's literature component. The literature component was introduced in 2000 in secondary schools to help learners improve their proficiency levels as well as develop appreciation for literature. The syllabus incorporates various literary texts including short stories, novels, poems, and drama (Kaur & Nooraida, 2014). Besides that, one of the SPM examination subjects, 2206 English Literature was also introduced by the Ministry of Education in the move to improve literacy among learners as well as improve their English proficiency. In the examination of English Literature subject, three sections are tested namely short stories or novels, dramas and poems. Currently, this subject has been revised in 2020 with a new list of literary texts in accordance to the Cambridge IGCSE standards where learners are expected to achieve literature understanding that is in par

with international standards (Wong, 2020). Under the novel section for the English Literature subject, *The Clay Marble* by Minfong Ho and *The Lost King* by Scot Gardner were listed.

With the use of novels in English Literature subject in Malaysian secondary schools, this study aims to utilise one of the novels, *The Clay Marble* by Minfong Ho to analyse the language use of the writer in conveying the experiential meaning through the characters and events. *The Clay Marble* by Minfong Ho was selected for analysis due to its highlight on the Cambodian Civil War and its implications through the representation of the characters and events in the novel. The plot of the novel refers to the historical real-life event of the Cambodian Civil War towards the end of Khmer Rouge regime reign in 1970s to 1980s where the Cambodians suffered from executions, lack of food and rations, and separation from family members (Zimmer, Knodel, Kim & Puch, 2006). The writer was also a relief worker helping refugees during the 1980s at the Thai-Cambodian border. With the analysis on this novel, the language use by the writer to convey the experiential meaning in relation to the history of the Cambodian Civil War can be observed.

### **1.1 Purpose of Study**

This study aims to utilise Halliday's (1994) transitivity analysis to demonstrate the author's ideation of the Cambodian Civil War through the representation of the characters and events with the Cambodian war as context. The transitivity system will demonstrate how experiential meaning is realised in a novel written by a Chinese-American writer who had first-hand experience with Cambodian refugees as a relief worker at the Thai-Cambodian border (Alraimi & Abdalla, 2019).

### **1.2 Statement of Problems**

The problem addressed in this study is the use of language by literary writers in conveying the intended meaning to readers through their linguistic choices. Literary works consist tiers of meaning where the linguistic forms either explicitly convey their literal meaning or implicitly convey their implied meaning and the writers' point of view (Hasyim & Syarifuddin, 2021). This poses difficulty in determining the meaning of the linguistic structures and the lexis as each lexi has its meaning but when structured together, their relationship is no longer direct as there might be implied meaning or another meaning altogether (Hasyim & Syarifuddin, 2021).

Moreover, literary works consist of linguistic complexity which includes difficult vocabulary and complex sentence structures which result in multiple interpretations (Mncwango & Gazu, 2017). In literary texts, writers create an imaginary world with characters through the writers' point of view which can create multiple different meanings when used in context. Writers usually express the society, events and values through the characters in the story (Nasrum & Faiqah, 2020). With that in view, writers' works usually reflect their own experiences and worldview when expressing the characters and events in the narrative (Akinola & Olatipe, 2016). From there, writers would make linguistic choices accordingly based on the social purpose of their texts to convey the intended meaning in portraying the characters and events in the certain piece of literary work (Fernandez, 2018). In the novel 'The Clay Marble', the writer portrayed certain themes, context and characterisation referring to the Cambodian Civil War that are linguistically complex with backdrops that require readers to relate to specific schemata. There is a linguistic knowledge gap in understanding writer's language use in relation to the world knowledge. Thus, this requires further analysis to reveal the language use and intended meaning conveyed by the writers to the readers.

Additionally, there is a need to understand people's use of language in context and the way it is structured as it would help us understand language (Nagao, 2019). In the written context especially literary texts such as novels, the understanding of language is subjective as the usage and comprehension of language is context-based. Considering the factor that in literary texts, language use is context-based, writers possess a systemic choice when using language in a particular context to achieve their social goals. This makes the context of a situation relevant in the writers' meaning-making choice (Nagao, 2019). With that mentioned, it is a concern to understand how literary texts such as novels represent ideas and characters through the writers' paradigmatic system of language choices. It is imperative to explore why writers' structure their language in a certain way to represent characters and events as well as to understand how the linguistic patterns are arranged to mean what it does to its readers (Pasaribu, Sinambela & Manik, 2020). The further understanding on the representation of ideas and characters in literary texts that are beyond the literal meaning helps to bridge the gap between language and the implied meaning of the writer (Liu & Ye, 2021).

Besides that, this study looks to uncover the ways certain linguistic choices affect the characterisation, the worldview of the writer as well as the contextual interpretation of the intended meaning in literary texts using transitivity analysis which stemmed from the Systemic Functional Linguistic Theory (Megheirbi, 2010). The Systemic Functional Linguistic theory is

concurrently a theory of language as well as a method for text analysis to understand the context of use. Studies by linguists have recognised that structures of language in literary texts deliver particular meanings and ideas that are usually inconsistent with the surface meaning which requires further decoding of the structures and identifying linguistic clues to grasp the writer's perspective (Fernandez, 2018). Literary texts are written to convey a certain intended purpose where linguistic choices made by writers are heavily influenced by their world experiences (Alraimi & Abdalla, 2019). The Transitivity System helps to understand the intended purpose of the text, the intended meaning of the text in context, and the word choices and structures used by the writers (Alraimi & Abdalla, 2019). The need to understand the writers' worldview is vital for comprehension of literary texts. Through the transitivity system, the mental reflection of the writers' worldview in their language usage in literary texts can be determined which subsequently helps to uncover meaning expressed through the linguistic structures (Mehmood, Amber, Ameer & Faiz, 2014). Moreover, it can help to understand how the writers utilise their characters, events and storyline to convey the intended values which reflects the writers' worldview that is beyond the explicit linguistic forms (Al-Janabi, 2013).

Moreover, there is the need to conduct more studies in understanding SFL in literary text analysis (Pasaribu, Sinambela & Manik, 2020) due to the widespread application of SFL in analysing literary text. The Transitivity System has led to a new perspective in analysing discourse. SFL is regarded as a useful tool in understanding the communication between the writer and reader through text due to its less conventional manner as it shows the paradigmatic system of linguistic choices which helps to make sense why a sentence is structured the way it is to bring forth certain meanings and ideas (Nørgaard, 2003). However, the use of SFL in literary text analysis covers a wide range of aspects such as the writers' goals and intentions, character development and interaction, and text organisation. With additional studies applying the transitivity system as a tool in analysing texts, it would provide a better understanding on its usage in analysing literary texts as it can uncover the writer's language use in conveying the experiential meaning of a real-life historical event.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

- a) What are the types of transitivity processes used in 'The Clay Marble' by Minfong Ho?
- b) How are the characters or events represented through the writer's ideation of the Cambodian Civil War and its implications?

## **2. Literature Review**

The use of transitivity analysis has been receiving attention on various textual materials such as novels, short stories, textbooks, newspaper articles and poems. This is because language is a social phenomenon where we interpret what is being said orally or written textually. In understanding the ideational function of language, transitivity analysis is significant in understanding the experiential meanings contained in the text coherently (Ammara, Anjum & Javed, 2019). The Transitivity system is useful to explore the ways languages construct ideologies, themes, and meanings, making it an essential system in construing human experiences of the inner and outer world encoded in language (Ammara, Anjum & Javed, 2019).

The significance and benefits of the transitivity analysis is apparent as seen in past studies conducted on both fiction and non-fiction materials by Arifiani & Meisuri (2014), Cunanan (2011), Darani (2014), Emilia, Moecharam & Syifa (2017), Isti'anah (2014), Song (2013), and Wahyudin (2016). In recent studies conducted on novels by Ahmad (2019), Chiranorawanit & Sripicharn (2020), Daulay, Harida & Rambe (2020), Rendadirza & Ardi (2020), and Yousaf, Mushtaq & Arshad (2022), the use of transitivity analysis mainly focus on how characters are established, how ideology and themes are conveyed as well as how specific process types were used by writers to convey the characters and plots in the novels. However, this study aims to look at how writers use language to linguistically structure a historical event through the representation of characters and events in the novel. There is a lack of studies that looks at the writer's use of language in conveying historical events through characters and events in novels. This will help to better understand how historical events can be conveyed in literary texts. With more linguistic analysis conducted, a better comprehension and information on language use in literary texts can be discovered.

Nevertheless, the abovementioned past studies share the commonality of using transitivity analysis in understanding the experiential meaning in texts and they corroborate that transitivity analysis is suitable in analysing texts to understand meaning conveyed through the grammatical, structural and word choices as well as identifying the linguistic features of texts (Senjawati, 2016). Transitivity analysis demonstrates language patterns and how meaning and ideology is conveyed in literary texts as it uncovers the relation between lexis, their meaning and their influence on the structure of the linguistic features in the text (Nguyen, 2012). The transitivity system uses the text itself in analysing sentence structures to discover the linguistic patterns and how words are structured to convey meaning. Thus, it is widely used

by linguists to give light to the writers' language usage in literary texts (Nguyen, 2012) as transitivity analysis can investigate how writers portray certain characters and express certain issues in their works (Isti'anah, 2015).

Therefore, transitivity analysis conducted on literary texts successfully reveal how the writer's word choices and structural arrangements of those words help to convey the themes and shape the characters in the texts. As this study focuses on looking at the way language is used in literary texts, how the linguistic choices affect the writer's characterisation and worldview in a literary piece as well as the need to further understand the transitivity system due to its prevalence in text analysis, it can help to improve understanding on the language use of literary writers.

## 2.1 Theoretical Framework

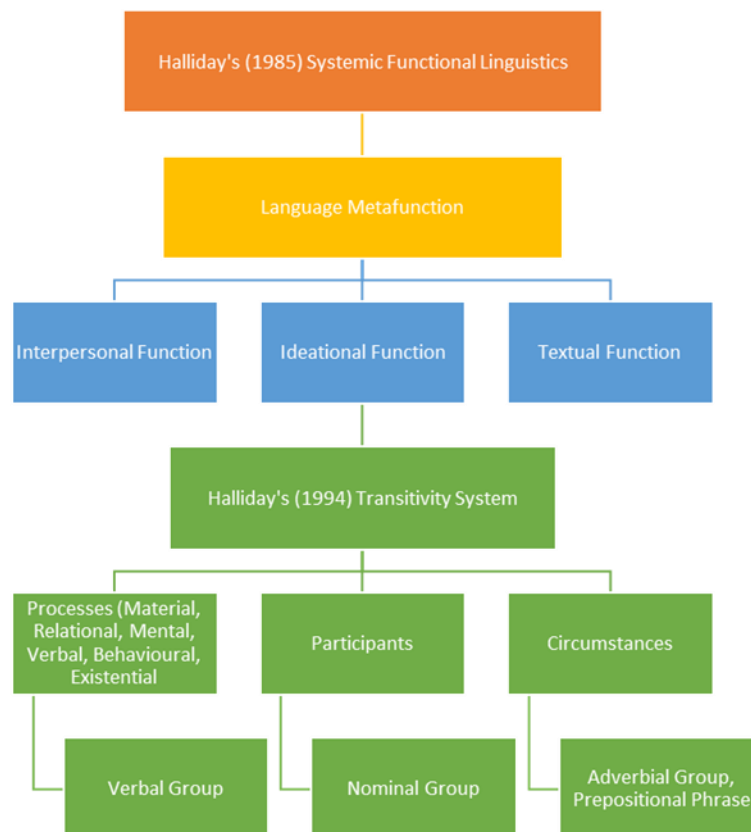


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

### **2.1.1 Systemic Functional Linguistic Theory and Transitivity System**

In analysing the language use of literary writers, this study is applying the theoretical framework of the Systemic Functional Linguistic Theory due to its focus on the functionality of language that looks at how the meaning of a language is constructed and comprehended. The Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) was developed and proposed by Micheal Halliday in 1985. Under the SFL theory, Halliday came up with the Transitivity System (1994), encompassing the transitivity analysis which analyses clause structures to show who does what to whom, and how. Transitivity analysis was developed by Michael Halliday (1994) to explain how people make meaning through a system of choices where writers create meanings according to social circumstances (Piyaporn, 2018). This means that certain word choice or grammatical form reflects the attitudes and shapes human perception of the world.

According to Halliday's SFG, language performs three metafunctions in contexts namely, ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Each clause performs all three metafunctions at the same time. However, the focus of this study is on the transitivity system which uncovers the ideational metafunction. Ideational metafunction refers to the concept that humans use language to express their experience and their perception of the world. This can be analysed through a transitivity system in which each clause is analysed into process, participants, and/or circumstances (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Simply, these components show how processes involve participants in certain circumstances.

The transitivity system consists of six process types based on the six categories of transitivity verbs namely material process, mental process, verbal process, behavioural process, relational process and existential process (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Material process shows the doings and happenings where the actor does something with/without a goal (I kicked the ball) while mental process looks at the mental sensing of the participant which usually involves thoughts and feelings that are innate in nature (I like flowers) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Relational process functions to characterise and identify where 'be' verb is usually used (He is handsome) while behavioural process reflects the physiological and psychological behaviour of a conscious being (I dreamt of a beautiful pony) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Verbal process is used to indicate saying (I replied, "I am confident") while existential process represents something that exists or happens and is usually accompanied with the word 'there' (There was once a beautiful girl who owned a magnificent horse) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).



### **3. Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative research design where the descriptive qualitative method discusses the types of transitivity processes used as well as how characters and events are represented through author's ideation of the Cambodian Civil War. This study incorporated Halliday's (1994) Transitivity System as the theoretical foundation in answering the research questions.

The sample of this study involved the novel titled 'The Clay Marble' by Minfong Ho. This novel was selected as it depicts the Cambodian Civil War and its implications on the people through the characters and events. This novel introduces the idea of a ruling party, Khmer Rouge and the situation of a country prior independence. In relevance, Malaysia, formerly known as Malaya experienced the British colonialism (19<sup>th</sup> century, pre-WWII, post-WWII), Japanese invasion (1941-1945) and a communist insurgence (1947) before achieving independence in 1957 (MyGovernment Portal, 2023). By analysing this novel, it can visualise the ways writers' structure language to convey the concept of a country before achieving independence. Additionally, this novel is used in Malaysian secondary schools for the SPM English Literature subject, so it increases the relevance of this study as the transitivity analysis allows readers to see meaning and word choices in different arrangements through the grammatical system which subsequently, visualises how language is constructed and used in texts to convey meaning (Maya, Eliza & Safitri, 2020). Thus, applying the transitivity analysis on The Clay Marble novel, the analysis on the meaning, word choices, content and purpose of the text can aid in better comprehension of the text and the writer's language use.

Notably, this study referred to the Transitivity Process Identification Test that was developed by Isti'anah (2014) to indicate the transitivity process used in the clauses determined. The test developed by Isti'anah (2014) has listed the types of transitivity process and the generalised grammatical structure of each transitivity process to allow clearer identification of the process type. This test helps to corroborate the data analysis as it shows clear classification of the transitivity processes into its respective types.

The analysis was done in four stages. The data was first analysed in an inductive approach where content analysis was employed to determine characters and prominent events significant to the Cambodian Civil War in the novel. Secondly, the respective sentences were extracted and followed by transitivity analysis being performed clause by clause. The transitivity processes that were used by the writer to portray the characters and events were

determined. Thirdly, the transitivity processes that were determined were tabulated and the frequencies were compared to see which processes were used in context to portray the characters and events. Lastly, the linguistic features such as sentence structure, vocabulary choices and grammatical structure were shown and discussed. The findings were discussed in themes that were determined from the portrayal of the characters and events.

#### **4. Findings**

Table 1: Frequency of Transitivity Processes Used in the Novel

<b>Process Types</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Material Process	69
Mental Process	31
Behavioural Process	20
Verbal Process	20
Relational Process	42
Existential Process	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>

From the analysis, a total of 190 clauses were determined in conveying the major events of the novel. All the process types were used to describe and convey the situation of the Khmer Rouge regime during the Cambodian Civil War through the representation of the characters and events in the novel. Through the transitivity analysis, it determined the characters, and the events that the writer wishes to convey in *The Clay Marble*. There are several characters such as Dara, Jantu, Sarun, Nea and Mother as the novel shows the growth and challenges faced by these characters during the ruling of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. One of the main events which clearly shaped the main character, Dara was the symbolic use of the clay marble to signify courage, hope, bravery, perseverance and strength. Jantu, who is dexterous, made the clay marble as an encouragement for Dara to face most of the challenges as they seek to live a better life. Through this, we can see the effects of the clay marble on Dara as it transforms her to become a leader.

It is notable that material process and relational process were used most at 69 clauses and 42 clauses respectively. The use of material process can be seen used mainly to describe the action of Jantu making the clay marble for Dara as well as Dara touching the clay marble to gain courage, strength, reassurance and good luck when faced with adversities throughout the novel. In the table below, we can see the writer describing the action of Jantu making the clay marble as well as Dara touching the marble using various verbs such as roll, held, squeezed, touched and took out.

Table 2: Breakdown of Clausal Structure (Material Process)

Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance
She	continued to <i>roll</i> <i>sculpting</i> <i>rounding</i>	the ball of clay it, it.	in her hands,
I'm	<i>making</i>	you	another marble, Dara
I	<i>held</i>	the marble	in my hands.
I	<i>squeezed</i>	the marble	for good luck.
I	<i>reached in</i> <i>touched</i>	my pocket my magic marble	lightly.
I	<i>took out</i>	the clay marble	

Besides that, material process is used to depict the ruling of the Khmer Rouge regimen and the living conditions of people in Cambodia. This can be seen in the clausal breakdown below.

Table 3: Breakdown of Clausal Structure (Material Process)

Actor	Process: Material	Goal
the Khmer Rouge soldiers	had even <i>set fire</i>	to our houses and rice barn
bombs	were <i>dropped</i> around	Us
Goal	Process: Material	Circumstance

many of the villagers                      were *killed or hurt*                      by shrapnel.  
 Had he    been *killed*    because he knew how to read and write

In terms of relational process, the writer used it predominantly to describe the surroundings when the clay marble was used by Dara as well as the physical properties of the clay marble through Dara’s touch. Besides that, the relational process is used to express the magical properties in the clay marble that is believed to symbolise good luck and give power to those who possess it. The writer can be seen instilling the idea of the clay marble as an object that possesses magic powers which helped Dara overcome her challenges. As seen below, the properties of magic are attached to the clay marble with the word ‘magic’, ‘stronger’ and ‘powerful’, acting as an attribute for the clay marble.

Table 4: Breakdown of Clausal Structure (Relational Process)

<b>Carrier</b>	<b>Process: Relational</b>	<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>
it	<i>was</i>	a magic marble	
Except this one	<i>will be</i>	more powerful	
It	<i>will have</i>	stronger magic	in it.
It	<i>will make</i>	you strong, brave, and patient	
The magic marble	<i>was</i>	firm and smooth	in my hand.

However, we can see how the writer unveils the symbolic representation of the clay marble in the form of negative sentences followed by the reiteration that the magic was in Dara herself all along. It shows the realisation of the character, Dara, that magic is not in the clay marble, but rather in her mind and resolution. The use of ‘was never’ and ‘isn’t’ as seen in the two sentences below shows that the marble didn’t possess any magical powers as opposed to what Dara had thought all along. Followed by the three sentences, we can see Dara’s realisation that the magic was in her all along and that she was the one who mustered up the courage and persevered through the challenges.

- a) The magic *was never* in the marble.

- b) The magic *isn't* in the marble.
- c) The magic *is* only in the making of the marble.
- d) It *is* in you.
- e) It *is* in me!

These were to convey the lesson that one has the magic powers in them to be brave, determined, persevere, and to be strong when faced with life challenges.

On the other hand, the writer used mental process to describe when Dara thinks in her mind of the clay marble and its magical powers (I *knew* it was actually the magic that Jantu had put in the marble) as well as verbal process when Dara was told that the magic was in fact not in the clay marble but rather it was from within her that she was able to face all her challenges with perseverance and courage (“It worked,” Jantu *said* gently, “The magic was never in the marble, sister,” she *said*.). Moreover, behavioural process was also present when depicting the emotions of Dara when she arrived at the refugee camp (I *breathed* a deep sigh of contentment.), finding her family after being separated (Then I *saw* Sarun. Then, as if in a dream, I *heard* someone calling my name.), and experiencing Jantu’s death (she *breathed* a deep sigh, Jantu *closed* her eyes, she was *closing* herself off from me.).

Moreover, another notable finding was the use of different process types in a sentence to convey the meaning and representation of the clay marble. Most sentences are complex and consist of two or more clauses as seen below.

Table 5: Breakdown of Sentence Structure (More than one process type)

Sayer	Process: Verbal	Receiver	Carrier	Process: Relational	Attribute		
“I	<i>told</i>	you	It	<i>was</i>	a magic marble.”		
Senser	Process: Mental	Phenomenon	Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Sayer	Process: Verbal
“If you	<i>believe</i>	in it,	it	will <i>help</i>	you,”	she	<u><i>said</i></u> .

## **5. Discussions**

From the findings, the writer uses complex sentences which involve more than one process type to convey the events of the novel. However, through the transitivity analysis, readers can break down the sentences into smaller linguistic units and make out the meaningful clauses and subsequently, understanding the sentences in context. Besides that, through the transitivity analysis, it can be seen that most of the sentences have a fixed sentence structure in terms of the arrangements of the grammatical units for each process type which makes it easier to identify the functions of the sentences whether it is to describe the sufferings of the Cambodians as refugees, or the use of the clay marble to symbolise self-confidence and self-growth to the character, Dara. From the analysis, there are several main themes that can be discussed in terms of how the writer used language to represent the Cambodian Civil War and its implications in the novel through the characters and events.

### **5.1 The effects of war on the people of Cambodia**

The writer mostly used material processes to visualise the sufferings and the implications of the war between the Khmer Rouge and the invading Vietnamese soldiers. The sentence structure mostly shows what the Khmer Rouge has done to properties, land or people with negative-connoted words such as setting fires to houses, bombings, nothing to eat, fighting, killed and hurt. Besides that, the writer also used relational processes to express the idea of liberation by using the word ‘nightmare’ as well as depicting feeling of fear through the words ‘cold’ and ‘silent’ respectively. The use of behavioural and mental processes also showed the effects of the war on the people’s emotions and mind as the war was described as a long nightmare where the people are gripped with cold dread, and they are unable to wake up from it. This shows that the writer was able to linguistically convey this theme by using several types of processes with specific words and structure to describe the physical and mental effects of war on its people. This would allow the readers to comprehend both the physical as well as mental impact of war.

### **5.2 The tight-knit community relationship among refugees**

This is a theme that was implicitly shown through the interactions between the characters when Dara and her family arrived at the refugee camp. This can be seen in the use of verbal processes

and behavioural processes as the character, Nea conversed with Dara's mother ("Until you get your rations, my family can share ours with you", she *said*) as well as extended a smile (She was *smiling* up at us.). Besides that, the use of material processes was also apparent as the families were sharing with each other (The families who arrived earlier *sharing* with those who come after them.). The writer structured the sentences by showing physically how Nea welcomes Dara's family through friendly gestures even though they are strangers because they shared the same fate- seeking for safety at the refugee camp. This showed that the characters were still a tight-knit community and they cared for one another even though each of them is going through a difficult time as they can understand and relate with each other. This allows readers to better understand the lives of refugees who are compassionate even when they are stricken with hunger and the unsecured life during war.

### **5.3 Courage and bravery stems from a person and not from a lifeless object**

Subsequently, it can be seen how the writer reorient the beliefs of the character Dara using relational and mental processes. The writer used relational processes to allow the character Dara to realise that the courage and bravery which she believed was given to her by the clay marble was nothing but just her own determination and courage. These values stemmed from inside her rather than a lifeless object. As seen in the examples provided in the findings above, the writer uses relational process to instil the idea that magic was never present in the clay marble using negative clauses before the iteration that the magic was in the character herself and showing the process of the character, Dara believing in herself.

### **5.4 The idea of believing in yourself and self-growth through challenges conveyed using the symbolism of the clay marble**

The writer used action verbs to convey the symbolism of the clay marble as a form of comfort and the physical form of good luck towards the character Dara. The clause "I *squeezed* the marble for good luck" shows the representation of the clay marble as a form of comfort as well as the magical powers of the clay marble to bring about good things for the character, Dara. In clauses such as "I *held* the marble in my hands" and "*touch* my magic marble lightly" shows the comfort that the clay marble brings towards the character, Dara. This shows that the writer wishes to convey to its readers that something lifeless such as a clay marble can bring comfort

if one believes that it possesses the magical powers to bring about good luck. However, towards the end of the novel, the writer can be seen instilling the idea of self-believe and self-growth as the character Dara was finally enlightened that she was able to overcome all the challenges that she faced because she believed in herself and that she possessed the courage and strength inside herself and that she does not need a magic clay marble anymore.

Even though the writer utilises the Cambodian Civil War as the backdrop of the novel's plot, the symbolism of the clay marble was the imperative of the novel, *The Clay Marble*. The writer can be seen conveying the moral of the story using an object, clay marble to instil the idea of self-belief and self-growth by using action and the attributive qualities of the clay marble. The writer mainly used material process, relational process and mental process as they are more suitable to describe the actions and emotions of the characters as well as the attributes attached to the clay marble. Besides, the material, relational and mental process also functioned to depict the war and its implications on the Cambodians. Therefore, it is visible that the writer has managed to successfully convey the main concept of this novel to its readers by showing the development of the characters and values conveyed in relevance to the experiential meaning attached to the Cambodian Civil War.

In other past studies conducted on novels, the use of material process and relational process are most dominant which is in line with the findings of this study. In the study by Yousaf, Mushtaq & Arshad (2022), William Golding's novel *Free Fall* also used material and relational process the most to convey the experiential meaning of the novel as the processes function best to convey the intended meaning of the writer. As seen in the study on Mary Norton's novel *The Borrower* by Rendadirza (2020), the use of relational process was the most followed by material process. In the study by Ammara, Anjum & Javed (2019) on the novel *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf, the use of relational process was most dominant followed by mental process and material process. The findings of the study are slightly different than this study as mental process is more prominent than material process. Nevertheless, material process and relational process are dominantly utilised by novel writers as they can convey the function and contextual meaning intended by novel writers.

The transitivity processes can clearly visualise the sentence's function and meaning conveyed. In a past study conducted, the researcher concluded that the transitivity system presents the linguistic features of the texts which helps to improve in comprehension of the texts (Al-Janabi, 2013). Most studies conducted on novels using the transitivity system were



able to identify what events or characters are represented through the transitivity processes. It is proven that the interpretation of meaning in a text is supported with the use of transitivity system as it shows detailed linguistic evidence and analysis (Nguyen, 2012).

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings managed to highlight the writer's language use through transitivity analysis such as the conveyance of the Cambodian Civil War through the representation of the characters and events in the novel as well as the use of the clay marble as a symbolic representation of the growth of the main character amid her sufferings. The transitivity system was able to unfold the development of the characters and the linguistic choices of the writer to express the characters and events in the novel. Moreover, the transitivity analysis was able to break down the complex sentences into simple clauses and the syntactic structure of sentences were portrayed through the clausal breakdown and word choices. It also managed to corroborate findings with other past studies where material process and relational process are mostly used in novels. Therefore, it can help linguists and readers to better understand how certain concepts and world knowledge can be conveyed through literary language use as they will be able to visualise the sentence structure, word choices, and the way the events or characters are being represented in relevance to the world experiences. However, this study is still limited as more studies can be conducted on other literary text materials using transitivity analysis to get further understanding on the language use of writers and contextual meaning intended by the literary text writers. All in all, transitivity analysis can aid to improve idea comprehension of literary texts (Marhamah & Mukhaiyar, 2019) as well as the author's ideation through his or her language use in literary texts.

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