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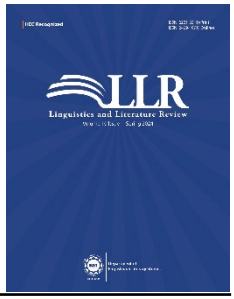

Title: **Confluence of Text and Genre in Kincaid's "Girl": A Transitivity Analysis**

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Confluence of Text and Genre in Kincaid's "Girl": A Transitivity Analysis

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore "Girl" (1978), a short story by Jamaica Kincaid. Halliday's theory of transitivity is applied to examine the alliance between text and genre, and how it helps reveal the ideological construction within a colonized society. The roles of the two women in the poem have been analyzed to identify the linguistic choices that play a significant role in emphasizing the character of women as suppressed individuals, symbolizing the British colonization of Antiguan society. The study concludes that Pakistani society, which also remained under British rule, shares similarities with Antiguan culture with regard to the control and suppression of women. Women are depicted as lacking freedom of thought, unable to raise their children appropriately and support others. The study, thus, highlights the issue concerning the status of women in Pakistani society and aims to advocate for change by accepting their rights and granting them freedom for an independent life.

***Keywords*:** colonization, feminism, hybrid literary study, textual genre, transitivity analysis

Introduction

The present study intends to explore the blend of genres and the confluence of text and generic boundaries by analyzing a short story cum prose-poem "Girl"[1]. The poem represents women's role from multiple angles, illustrating how women may be misunderstood by their family members and lack the freedom to live their own lives. The poem also suggests that societal reputation and success are contingent upon women's unconditional acceptance of social norms, male domination and restricted environment. In order to have a deeper understanding of Kincaid's intent, the text of "Girl'

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[1] For more information about the short story "Girl", please click on the link https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1978/06/26/girl

and its generic blend will be analyzed. Since the poem reflects on social codes at the domestic level, the theory of transitivity will help to discover how a specific language type can reflect society along with its strengths and downsides, intended purpose, and prevailing ideologies. The study, thus, discusses the harmony between text and genre and how the theory of transitivity unveils social context without compromising this alliance.

Rabea and Almahameed (2018) have briefly shared Jamaica Kincaid's life and her work. As an Antiguan-American author, she wrote numerous essays, novels, and short stories which reflect individuality, gender inferiority, society at domestic and commercial level, relationships within family and with the outside world, and colonial Antigua. Her real name was Elaine Potter Richardson, but she decided to adopt the pseudonym Jamaica Kincaid to maintain anonymity. In 1976, she published a collection of her short stories under the title 'At the Bottom of the River' covering a variety of themes such as individuality, gender domination, controlled social structures and their impact on family relationships and the overall society of colonial Antigua. For instance, novels like *Annie John* (1984) and *Luci* (1990) portray mother-daughter association. *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996) and *My Brother* (1997) recount Kincaid's stressful relationship with her mother and the death of her younger brother respectively. Her recent publication *See Now and Then* (2013) encapsulates the theme of divorce where a woman abandoned by her husband makes continuous efforts to find love. The prose poem 'Girl' is the first short story of the collection known as 'At the Bottom of the River'. The long run-on-sentence poem discloses the overpowered feminine side prevailing through generations and how stressful it was to be a girl in the Antiguan culture. The young girls are controlled by their mothers and are bound to follow their instructions blindly which further makes them succumb to social structures infused by patriarchy. This also indicates the colonizer and colonized correlation between the mother and daughter relation at the micro level. The poetess unfolds distinguished themes such as woman inferiority, social, gender and sexual reputation, domesticity, lack of communication followed by unhealthy relationships between parents and children, and how it affects a woman's overall personality and her life (Edubirdie, 2021).

Text and genres are distinguishable but inseparable entities and it is, therefore, crucial to understand a genre before analyzing a text. A genre specifies social purpose, targeted audience, content organization, and

linguistic choices, which further elucidates a text (Trosborg, 1997). Text, on the other hand, is a form of written or spoken language. As it is asserted by Tuija (1990) that text production, is a structural process that is considered to be a static yet purposeful concept directed by situational factors. Text has a variety of categories known as genres such as a radio play, a newspaper article, and an instructional menu. Trosborg has further referred to Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995; as cited in Trosborg, 1997) stating that text can be realized through understanding the communicative purpose of the genre. Trosborg (1997) further explain:

> Because it is impossible for us to dwell in the social world without repertoires of typified social responses in recurrent situations - from greetings to thankyous to acceptance speeches and full-blown, written expositions of scientific or scholarly investigators - we use genres to package our speech and make of it a recognizable response to the exigencies of the situation. (p. 7)

Text is produced through language which has multiple functions, one of them is to deliver meaningful communication by using a variety of systems such as semantics, lexicogrammar, and phonology. Text, as a product of a systematic process, starts with conveying meanings by using appropriate lexical choices to achieve a set target. Hence, phonological units add to language comprehension and expression in an orderly manner (Eggins, 1994).

The very perceptible combination of grammar and vocabulary is dependent upon each other (Sardinha, 2012). This inescapable interplay between grammar and vocabulary, and the nature of their distinct relationship cannot be ignored. In the galaxy of the lexicon, every word has its own grammar (verbs with extended forms and adverbs), and each cluster of words falls in relationship with the other words (adjectives and their categories). These cluster words follow a systematic syntactic pattern which can be understood through an approach called lexico-grammar (Hutz, 2018). Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is an approach which targets language functions and their syntactic patterns, including the lexicogrammar approach. SFL, at its best, evaluates the notion of language, its purpose, and how it has been used in its social context (O'Donnell, 2011).

The systemic Functional Linguistics approach was proposed by M. A. K. Halliday and his fellows in 1960 in the United Kingdom, and later in

Australia (O'Donnell, 2011). For meaningful context, SFL generalizes language by combining discourse semantics and lexicogrammar. This peculiar combination is further subdivided into three components; namely, experiential meta-function for clause analysis, interpersonal meta-function for exchanging a clause, and textual meta-function to break a clause in the form of a message (Eggins, 2004).

This study emphasizes on experiential meta-function to understand how text and its underlying grammatical resources work as a tool to portray reality by adding nuances to it and sharing real-life experiences in the world around us. The theory of Transitivity, in this process, stands as one of the most significant aspects (Matthiessen & Halliday, 1997).

The theory of transitivity hinges on three constituents: the processes, the participants, and the circumstances. The process is identified as an action word or a verb and it is further subdivided into six processes known as material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential processes. these six processes are subcategorized as participants (Alvin, n.d.). The material process refers to physical actions or events, while the participants included in this process are the actor, goal, attribute, scope, client, and recipient. The mental processes refer to what has been seen, heard, smelled, or perceived such as hate, likes, and preferences. This very process involves cognition that deals with thoughts as to what has been remembered or decided. The mental process further splits into sensors and phenomena. The relational process signifies certain attributes by using a variety of adjectives. The attributive type also has subcategories, namely, carrier/attribute and token/value. Verbal processes are another type of experiential meta-function that are represented through participants called as, sayer, receiver, and verbiage. Then, the behavior process is subdivided into behaver and behavior. Lastly, in the existential process, the participants are called existent. circumstances are typically realized by adjuncts that answer w-h questions (Briones, 2016).

The poem under analysis has garnered significant attention from various researchers who have approached it from a variety of angles. While discussing the plot of the poem, Tearle (2022) stated that the name of the poem itself speaks up about a girl on the cusp of adulthood. The mother, following a one-sentence conversation, exhibits her uncritical approach towards the patriarchal society. The mother, as a participant, bows down to unjust social structures and she provides multiple advice to her daughter.

The girl, in order to have a respectable status in society, needs to follow the guidelines, as disobeying could lead to derogatory labels. The girls agency , as a participant, is undermined as her family members harbor doubts about her before she even has the chance to assert herself.

Rosenthal (2022) also explored the poem from the perspective of the overbearing nature of the mother and her pessimistic outlook on her daughter. She examines the challenges faced by women due to social discrimination and stereotypes, highlighting how families perpetuate these social issues through generations. The researcher aptly evaluates detrimental motherhood while examining the relationship between the girl and her mother. Rosenthal very wisely highlights various issues such as how mother's instructions become a hindrance in the development of a girl's character, identity, and social skills. She questions whether the mother would impart similar instructions to other children, especially boys; and whether her own conformity to social pressure influences her behavior. She finally provides other works of literary art which voice such similarities between generations, such as E. B. White's essay, "Once More to the Lake".

A text analysis has been conducted by Richardson (2017) which states that the large paragraph in the poem, separated by semicolons, asserts mother's power over her daughters. The power play depicts an imbalanced relationship between the two as the conversation is one-sided, giving less or no space to the girl to raise her voice for herself. The informal grammatical structure also represents the insignificance of education the mother feels in contrast to the instructions she passes on to make her daughter a well-behaved woman in society.

Literature Review

Previously, transitivity analysis has been used in many studies to understand the language, writer's purpose, organization, relationship between lexical items and their intended meanings, and underlying ideology presented in the text. In other words, the theory of Transitivity can better analyze an interplay between a text and genre in order to understand the underlying agenda of the writer.

Transitivity Analysis by Yaghoobi (2009) examined news structures in Newsweek and Kayhan International by identifying the roles of participants. The study proves that the same actors, Hizbullah and Israeli forces, were presented under different ideologies by different media

sources. Nguyen (2012) has applied Halliday's theory of Transitivity to identify the main character's personality presented through Hoa Pham's "Heroic Mother", and how linguistic choices help to construct the main character. The study revealed that observation of the text and linguistic analysis both play a vital role in understanding the main character named "heroic mother."

Transitivity system has been employed to *Lucy* (by Omari et al., 2020) to unfold gender suppression presented through the text. The data was further analyzed through qualitative and quantitative methods. The essay finds out that Kincaid's unsettled nature towards contemporary biased social conventions has been represented through women characters.

Christina (2020) in a conference proceeding has presented an essay entitled as *The Biological Mother in Daughter's Identity Formation in Jamaica Kincaid's Lucy.* The character of the mother represents Caribbean male-dominated society and motherhood values. Lucy refuses to return to her mother, thus, developing a diasporic identity. The speaker accurately highlights how the absence of the mother's role has a significant place in the identity formation process.

The poem 'Girl' has been explored from the perspective of its genre, situated between a prose poem and a short story to achieve the targeted outcome by Rabea and Almahameed (2018). Analyzing genre has helped the author to examine the federating affects through sound devices, repetition, alliteration and word choice which makes the selected work more like a prose poem than a short story. The paper covers issues related to power play through feminism and gender suppression within the colonized-infused culture in Antiguan society. It highlights the syntactic structure used to create a parallel effect such as "Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap, and wash the color clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clotheslines to dry". The repeated use of the conjunction 'and' and the breakthrough semicolon depicts the mother's control over her daughter's mind and the unique blend of genre in the poem. The unique narrative strategy of Kincaid, sound devices, direct voice, an internalized use of poetic language, lack of introduction and description about the setting, use of cacophony and euphony, and elements of analytical illustration of the story, make this piece of art a hybrid form of a prose poem than a short story.

This research is based on Halliday's theory of Transitivity which uncovers language patterns, purpose, meanings, and ideologies of a literary text in the poem, "Girl" (1978)[1]. Therefore, investigating this poem is worthwhile to understand how text and related genres are employed to uncover women's roles in Pakistan by comparing and contrasting Antiguan and Pakistani cultures.

The present study intends to explore the poem through a combination of the theory of transitivity and text and genre exploration, an approach that has not been undertaken before. Additionally, the poem has yet to be compared with Pakistani society to analyze the status of women and the challenges they encounter.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the underlying agenda using the experiential meta-function presented in "Girl"
2. To analyze the types of experiential meta-functions identified through the portrayal of women's roles in the selected work

Research Questions

1. How ideological constructions are made through experiential meta-function in the selected work?
2. What specific types of experiential meta-function can be identified through the depiction of women's roles in the selected work?

Theoretical Framework and Research Design

Halliday (1978) explained that language is represented in various ways, such as in text and utterances. It can function as a part of a complex system that is composed of multiple functions. This concept is referred to as Systemic Functional Linguistics, and it suggests that language is part of a vast network of interconnected systems. It also presents the concept of realization, which unveils the underlying relationship between language and context. According to Halliday (1978), language functions to realize the intended social purpose which uncovers the type of genre, while the context presents linguistic communication which involves text analysis. Understanding social purpose and context through Halliday's theory of Transitivity helps to understand how the language is being used to convey underlying meanings (Fakhruddin & Hassan, 2015). The present study

confines to experiential meta-function as to provide readers with an understanding of how Systemic Functional Linguistics is employed for text and genre analysis. The theory of transitivity also assists in analyzing the text, social purpose of the genre, use of registers, language analysis, and the choices of lexicogrammar in the selected poem.

The text selected for this research is "Girl" (1978) by Jamaica Kincaid. The experiential meta-function aids in analyzing how language is used to represent the world through text from the perspective of Pakistani society. Before the partition, the people of Pakistan were under British rule for over 87 years and were suppressed by them. Their social structures and power-play agendas are similar to those of Antiguan society. In both cultures, women have been treated as inferior creatures, having less or no power at all. Women are taught to be submissive and they become habitual to it by the time they become mothers. The elder ladies, being suppressed by men, enjoy power status over young girls in the family and quench their thirst by teaching the same values to their daughters, it, thus, continues to the next generations. By splitting and identifying clauses, this meta-function focuses on action at the level of who, whom, when, what, where, why, and how using the identified text, which also helps to identify the purpose, audience, type of language use, and the organization of the selected text. Thus, the analysis helps to understand a typical Pakistani woman's role in a patriarchal society, her boundaries, responsibilities, and values, social restrictions imposed upon her, etc. The Antiguan culture presented in the poem also reflects the same kind of colonized society prevailing in Pakistan. The women's suppression as a community and at the individual level, the challenges and boundaries enforced by men and their effects on society are similar to a great extent.

This study employed a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is a type of scientific research method which is efficacious in collecting data based on fixed values, opinions, behaviors related to the cultural and social background of a selected group of people. The qualitative research method uses a predefined route to investigate a problem which leads to findings that are not determined in advance (Mack et al., 2005). The qualitative research method is helpful to investigate and record the underlying agenda of the poem, and how the role of women has been portrayed by reflecting on social values, people's opinions, their perceived actions and reactions in Pakistani society. Kincaid's short story is the selected data for this research. In order

to find out and perceive the social purpose through genre analysis and linguistic analysis of the text, the theory of Transitivity is used as a tool for data analysis. Understanding social purpose through linguistic analysis of the poem uncovers the character's realization. Previously, researchers had employed the theory of Transitivity as a tool to fathom character's realization (Nguyen, 2012).

Data Analysis

The analysis of the poem asserts that the total word count of the text is 501. The text is broken down into clauses, using the theory of Transitivity, wherein each clause in the text is examined by using the Experiential meta-function/Transitivity analysis. The Process, the Participants, and the Circumstances were identified through the Experiential meta-function. The dominant processes were identified followed by their underlying themes and related ideologies.

The analysis starts with investigating the woman's role, with two participants in the poem: the active mother who trains her daughter, and the passive daughter who speaks only once at the end of the poem. It starts with the Material processes which are stretched at several clauses. In clauses 1a and 1b, 2a 2b, 5a, and 5b, the mother guides the daughter on when and how to wash the clothes, and when to put them out in the sun. In clause 3, she recommends her not to walk under the sun with a bare-head, "don't walk bare-head in the hot sun". [1] In clause 4, the mother tells her how to cook "cook pumpkin fritters in very hot but sweet oil." [1] In clauses 6a, 29-32, she is told how to shop smartly either a dress or a grocery to meet ends and be sure not to buy any faulty article. In clauses 7, 10, 13a, and 13b, the mother guides her to avoid telling if she sings benna in school. In clauses 8, 12, and 19, the mother tells her how to eat when accompanying others by saying, "it won't turn someone else's stomach." [1] In clauses 3, 9, 11, the mother tells her to walk decently when she goes out especially on Sundays. In clauses 11a and 11b, the mother says that she should stay away from the boys and never indulge in even short conversations with them. Clauses 14 and 15, share the mother's guidelines about sewing techniques, "this is how to make a buttonhole for the button you have just sewed on." [1] In clauses 17 and 18, the mother guides her about ironing a dress. The clauses under category 19, share how the mother tells her about how, when, and where to grow vegetables as certain vegetables bring insects into home while others need plenty of water to taste delicious. In clause 20, within its subcategories,

the girl is instructed to sweep different parts of the house. Clauses 21 and 22, explain which medicines should be utilized for the good purpose while which ones to be used for other purposes, respectively. Clauses 23 and 24, and their subcategories, tell how to go for fishing. Eventually, the topic is then diverted towards life and the advice that if a decision is not good one should just step back. In clauses 25-28, including all the subcategories, the mother talks about male and female relationships and how they bully each other. By the end of the poem, in clause 31, the girl asks her mother, "what if the baker won't let me feel the bread?" [1] The mother replies that would you really prefer to be a woman who is as low as a one who fails to receive respect even from the shopkeepers. Clauses 31, 9b, 16c, and 27c represent mental processes such as; she says, "feel the bread" [1] and "I know you". [1] The Relational processes (is, are, and have) in clauses number 6b, 6c, 9b, 15, 16c, 17a, 17b, 18a, 18b, 19a, 19c, 20a, 20b,20c, 21, 22, 23, 24a, 25, 26, 27a,27b, 28a, 28b, 29, 30, 32b. There is one verbal process, 'to say,' in clause number 32a.

In total, there are seventy processes. Among these, sixty are material processes, three are mental processes (feel, like, know), and one is verbal process (say). No behavioral processes are observed. The four existential processes (be, have, is, and are) are used repeatedly. There are two relational processes (be and have), which have been used on three different occasions. The greater proportion of material processes illustrates a woman's extensive responsibilities towards society and these are reflected through her role and characteristic attributes. Similar kinds of responsibilities are reflected in her relationship with the man in clauses 25-28 when the mother tells her how to handle her relationship and how to make critical decisions. The much greater proportion of material and relational processes project her status in society. Overall, the poet narrates that the system of this society is dependent entirely on women's shoulders.

Table 1

Clause Analysis Through Lexical Items and Processes Type

Clause No.	Lexical item	Type of process
1a	Wash	Material Process
1b	Put	Material Process
2a	Wash	Material Process
2b	Put/dry	Material Process
3	Walk	Material Process

Clause No.	Lexical item	Type of process
4	Oil	Material Process
5a	Sock	Material Process
5b	Take off	Material Process
6a	Make	Material Process
6b	Be	Relational Process
6c	Have	Relational Process
6d	Because	Material Process
6e	Hold up	Material Process
6f	Soak	Material Process
7	Sing/is	Material / Existential Process
8a	Eat	Material Process
8b	Turn	Material Process
9a	Try /walk	Material Process /Material Process
9b	Like/are	Mental/ Existential Process
9c	Bent	Material Process
10	Sing	Material Process
11a	Speak	Verbal Process
11b	Give	Material Process
12a	Eat	Material Process
12b	Follow	Material Process
13a	Sing	Material Process
13b	Never	Material Process
14	Is/sew	Existential / Material Process
15	Is/have/make/sewed	Existential/Material/Material
16a	Is/hem	Existential/Material Process
16b	See	Material Process
16c	Prevent, know, are, bent	Material/Mental/Existential/Material Process
17a	Is/iron	Existential /Material Process
17b	Have	Existential Process
18a	Is/iron	Existential /Material Process
18b	Have	Existential Process
19a	Is/grow	Existential /Material Process
19b	Harbors	Material Process
19c	Are/growing	Existential /Material Process
19d	Gets	Material Process

Clause No.	Lexical item	Type of process
19e	Makes/are/eating	Material/Existential/Material Process
20a	Is/sweep	Existential /Material Process
20b	Is	Existential Process
20c	Is	Existential Process
21	Is/make	Existential /Material Process
22	Is/make/throw/becomes	Existential/Material/Material/ Material Process
23	Is/catch	Existential /Material Process
24a	Is/throw	Existential /Material Process
24b	Fall	Material Process
25	Is/bully	Existential /Material Process
26	Is/bullies	Existential /Material Process
27a	Work/giving up/ fell	Material Process
27b	Work/are	Material/Existential Process
27c	Work/giving up/ feel	Material/Material/Mental Process
28a	Is/split up/ feel	Existential /Material/Mental Process
28b	Is/move	Existential /Material Process
28c	Fall	Material Process
29	Is/make	Existential /Material Process
30	Squeeze/ make/ is	Material/Material/Existential Process
31	Feel/let	Mental/Material Process
32a	Say	Verbal Process
32b	Are/going/be	Existential/Material/Relational Process
32c	Let	Material Process

Table 2

Number of Participants, Processes, Circumstances

Three Constituents	No. of Constituents
Participants	02
Processes	70
Circumstances	17

Table 3
Types and Total Number of Processes

Process Types	No. of Processes
Material	60
Mental	03
Behavioral	0
Verbal	01
Existential	04
Relational	02

Result

The experiential meta-function focuses on the micro and macro levels from clause analysis to text and genre analysis. Therefore, the discussion covers the text and genre analysis of the selected piece of work. The first passage answers the research questions, while the second paragraph discusses genre type. The *Girl* (Kincaid, 1979), is an unconventional work of art which depicts how a mother instructs her daughter to fit in a society. The underlying agenda of using the experiential meta-function is to present women to be submissive. The second objective of the study was to analyze the types of experiential meta-functions identified through the woman's role in the story. Through the analysis of various processes, it becomes evident that women face inequality and are burdened with societal expectations, forced to conform without the freedom to think or speak for themselves. The third objective of the study was to draw similarities between an Antiguan and Pakistani societies, both of which have experienced the impact of colonization. The powerful one holds all the right to control the inferior by setting boundaries and unjustified restrictions. The elder women spend their whole lives by obeying men and learn how to assert control over the less powerful, often perpetuating cycles of oppression. Additionally, it is suggested that women who gain power may perpetuate this cycle, seeking retribution for their own shattered dreams by exerting control over others.

The title and theme of the story reveal the targeted audience and the purpose of the story. The unconventional short story is written as an open form of poetry. It consisted of a single-sentence monologue containing 501 words. The short story has unrhymed lines of different lengths and breaks brakes and does not follow punctuation rules. This style and diction make the story an informal piece of work. The authors use the freedom of word

choice by picking up simple words that make the short story understandable. Since the purpose is to raise awareness among women who are less educated, have no time for themselves, and have almost no exposure, the decision to use simple words is justifiable. The purpose of the writer compelled the researcher to study the work from the perspective of Pakistani society. The general mood and tone of the story give rise to empathy for women, and this propels them to stand up for their rights and bring change in society.

Conclusion

The study shows that language creates a relationship between the writer and the audience as stated by Rabiah (2012). The selected lexico-grammatic features reflect acceptance, approval, certainty, or the contrastive situation in the society. The use of language shows the type of discourse and its influence on the readers. The study aims to reveal the importance of text in portraying the author's perspective and how clause analysis unveils the underlying specific agenda. The study also shows that text and genre are interlinked, analyzing one and ignoring the other will only bring an incomplete picture which is also discussed by Matthiessen and Halliday (1997). The researcher hopes to bring the realization of how text and genre analysis through the experiential meta-function is done and how language functions not only reflect the society but can also bring change. The study suggests that employing transitivity analysis through text genre exploration can highlight not only political but also several social and economic issues prevailing in Pakistani society which specifically have a great impact on women. The study also advocates freedom of thought and expression for Pakistani women, empowering them to raise children who excel in all aspects of life and make informed decisions. By living independent lives and expressing themselves without fear, Pakistani women can contribute to the countrys progress and establish it as a more civilized, politically stable, and socially equitable nation on the global stage.

Conflict of Interest

The author of the manuscript has no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data associated with this study will be provided by the corresponding author upon request.

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