
From Fancy to Feminist Frenzy Fight: An Ideational Grammatical Metaphor of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’

Juland Dayo Salayo*

University of Santo Tomas, Manila, The Philippines
Philippine Normal University, Manila, The Philippines
jdsalayo@ust.edu.ph

April Lontoc Macam

Trece Martires City Senior High School
Trece Martires City, Cavite, The Philippines
april.macam@deped.gov.ph

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between the story and the author’s personal life encounters. Specifically, it aims to construe the linguistic choices in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper*, which highlights the discriminatory factors that worsen the woman’s plights and struggles specifically shown by masculine dominance, feminine poor role positioning, oppression, and marginalization. Considering these issues, the current study aims to describe the author’s experience of the world, what’s inside her, and around her. Results show that the text has 629 transitivity processes, with relational as the dominant process type by the inanimate characters which effectively describes the kind of environment which shapes a clear conflict against her milieu. Among the participant roles and circumstances, carrier, and location show their dominance, respectively. An in-depth analysis using the transitivity system unveils the author’s connectivity to her own life presented through literary metaphors. The paper further proves that literature can be taught using linguistic approaches.

Keywords: Transitivity Processes, Systemic Functional Grammar, Women Empowerment, Gender Role Positioning

Introduction

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is now used as a framework for modern studies undergoing qualitative data analysis (To, Lê, & Lê, 2015). It has caught the attention of linguists due to its usefulness of understanding text through comprehensive analysis, which construe the functions of language. SFL can explain 'how language functions as interconnected system for making meaning' (Vathanalaoha & Tangkiengsirisin, 2018, p.641). Furthermore, SFL is found to be an objective theory that shows language functions and unravels the interlocutor's intention according to his/her choices of words and sentence structure (Martínez Lirola, 2010 cited in Castello, 2014). One widely used aspect of SFL is known as transitivity which was introduced by Halliday and his colleagues in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Salayo & Macam, 2019). Transitivity is a system that is used to capture one's experience in language (Simpson, 2005). This experience in language has "a 'figure' of happening, doing, sensing, saying, being or having" (p. 213). "All figures consist of a process unfolding through time and of participants being directly involved in this process in some way; and in addition there may be circumstances" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 213).

Transitivity system can interpret "why one type of structure should be preferred to another" (Simpson, 2005, p.22). Hence, this system can objectively analyze varieties of genres. Dental research article abstracts, for instance, were analyzed by To, Lê, and Lê (2015) using transitivity analysis which reveals that the stylistic pattern of crafting the abstract is outcome-based and objective since material processes dominated other processes. Even HIV-AIDS awareness slogan was analyzed as reflected on the study of Qoriah (2018). With a total of sixteen slogan of HIV-AIDS, it was found out that slogan writers preferred to spread their slogan through material processes allowing the readers to act on the message by doing something such as HIV prevention among others. Generally, the studies prove that transitivity can reveal not just the style of the author but the appropriate ways of writing a specific genre.

In addition, transitivity has recently been associated with critical discourse analysis. Literature shows that transitivity is best paired with CDA in terms of revealing dominance and power in another genre, which is a political interview. In Moetys's (2015) study, transitivity analysis reveals the power dominance of a politician through varieties and strategic use of the three processes such as material, mental and relational. Material process was used to boost the political will power of a politician especially in decision making.

Another genre which is in narrative form has been a favorite subject for transitivity analysis. Xenia (2014) utilized a short story titled *Sexy* by Jhumpa Lahiri's as data set for transitivity in order to analyze the main character named Miranda. Upon identifying the participants' roles and process types, Miranda is described as a thinker since mental processes dominate among other processes. More so, Miranda is characterized as defensive, passive, sensitive, kind, lonely woman' (p. 137) based on the choices of process types identified in the story. Likewise, Nguyen (2012) finds transitivity as an interesting framework in order to construe a story participant personality in the story titled *Heroic Mother* by Hoa Pham. This paper reveals the dominance of relational, behavioural and mental over material process which goes to show that the main character (the heroic mother) can only express her inner thoughts that she could not perform any activities due to old age.

A recently published study of Salayo and Macam (2019) further proves that transitivity could best describe the 'going on' of the character's experiences in the world. In their study, material processes, as the dominating process type, suggest the active role of the main character in story which is relevant to his life reformation brought by love, family and social acceptance.

The aforementioned studies indicate that it is through transitivity that the readers of the story can understand the author's choice of words and structure. According to Salayo and Macam (2019) "transitivity analysis and literary criticism complement each other to further derive an objective analysis of literary texts..." (p. 166). Transitivity can view the author's mental picture of reality which could help the readers further understand the 'going on' in the story participant's mind. "The concept of transitivity has been used by a number of linguists to shed more light on the use of language in a literary text" (Nguyen, 2012, p. 86).

However, the challenging part is how language can best work for literature. It takes great knowledge on language to linguistically analyze a text while using literary approaches at the same time in order to construe meanings from the text. This study accepts the challenge of using eclectic framework by relating literary criticism to a purely linguistic framework called transitivity. Particularly, this study would like to expound the notion presented in the study of Ahmed and Abdumughni (2019) that literary criticism and linguistics analysis are strongly connected with each other. These ways of analyses may demonstrate the relationship the linguistics aspects and emotional side of biographical criticism as inherent in the story.

Objective of the Study

This paper is focused on unveiling the relationship between author's view of reality as construed in the story titled *The Yellow Wallpaper* and her personal life encounter.

Specifically, it aims to:

1. identify the types of process, participant roles and circumstances used in the story based on the system of transitivity; and
2. relate the author's choice of the types of process, participant roles and circumstances to her personal life encounter.

Theoretical Framework

This study would mainly use transitivity theory proposed by Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) which was used to analyze each clause in the short story titled *The Yellow Wallpaper* authored by Charlotte Perkins Gilman's. All clauses consist of processes or the main verbs were chunked and distinguished according to each process type as follows:

1. Material process describes the 'going on' of outer experiences of the actors in the story through representing the reality of 'doing' allowing the characters to make physical events and active participation in the story;
2. Mental process reveals the inner experiences of the senser or character through sensing which is internalized through processes subcategories such as perception (i.e. seeing, hearing; reaction (i.e. loving, hating); and cognition (i.e. thinking, knowing);
3. Relational process is identified as 'being' which denotes the relationship of two entities. This process is an author's choice of making the storyline informative and highly descriptive;
4. Verbal process refers to the act of 'saying' consisting of three participants' roles such as: speaker (source of the message), receiver (to whom the message is addressed) and verbiage (what is being said). This process makes the story participant as an actual and authentic source of information.
5. Behavioral process reveals both outer and inner experiences of the characters reflecting their physiological and psychological behaviors like laughing, smiling, breathing and other processes which could not be identified as material and mental. This has one participant role called behavior which is described as having human's instinct and a conscious one.

6. Existential process represents the feature of existence which has a there-construction and goes with verb 'be' which maybe a choice of the author for allowing a new idea to be introduced while the human agency remains implicit.

Generally, transitivity involves clause representation with three components such as: (1) A process unfolding through the time; (2) The participants involved in the process; (3) Circumstances associated with the process (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004, p. 175). The above components "are organized in configuration that provides models or schema for construing our experience of what goes on" (p. 220). This study aims to find out how transitivity works in order to construe the model or schema of the author in relation to the story being analyzed. In addition, this study is also anchored on a literary approach called–biographical criticism. According to this approach, the life of an author is investigated and related to the meaning of the literary text (Ahmed & Abdulmughni, 2019).

Author's Background

Charlotte Perkins Gilman was born on July 3, 1860 at Hartford, Connecticut and died on August 17, 1935 at Pasadena, California. She was a prominent writer, lecturer, editor, publisher, humanist, and a social reformist who pioneered issues and theories concerning the rights of the women in the United States in a nonconformist way. Having been abandoned by her father during her infancy, her childhood is marked with poverty, loneliness, and seclusion. All intensified by her uncaring mother. This poor condition also caused her unsuccessful education.

In 1884, she married Charles W. Stetson but she divorced him after a decade letting her daughter lived with the father together with his new wife. This unsuccessful marriage was attributed to her depression, which later caused her total nervous breakdown.

Stating a new life in California, she began literary writings for different local publications. Among those non-fiction works that marked her name as a writer include *Women and Economics* (1898), *Concerning Children* (1900), *The Home: Its Work and Influence* (1903), *Human Work* (1904), *The Man-Made World* (1911), *His Religion and Hers: A Study of the Faith of our Fathers and the Work of our Mothers* (1923), and *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography* (1935). Similarly, she wrote fictions which both brought her to popularity and at the same time, provoked controversies. Some of them include *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), *What Diantha Did* (1910), *Moving the Mountain* (1911), and *The Crux* (1911). In 1893 and 1911, she also wrote poems titled *In This Our World and Suffrage Songs and Verses*, respectively.

In 1894, she worked as the editor of the *Impress*, organ of the Pacific Coast Woman's Press Association, together with Helen Campbell. While writing, she found time as well to be a lecturer to talk significant social issues concerning primarily the discriminated and oppressed conditions of the women during her time. In 1900, she had her second marriage to her cousin, George Gilman whom she lived with in New York until 1922. Being a socialist, she was delegated to the International Socialist and Labor Congress in London where she was able to meet another significant socialist writers such as George Bernard Shaw. In 1909, she served as editor and publisher of *Forerunner*, a monthly magazine on women. In 1915, she founded Woman's Peace Party with Jane Addams, but later she committed suicide caused by mental anxiety (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020).

Story Background

The Yellow Wallpaper, a best-selling feminist short story, was published in 1892. This is narrated by an unnamed wife who elaborated her daily domestic sufferings in the presence of her husband who is also her physician. Having been diagnosed with nervous depression after giving birth, her husband recommended her get away from any kind of work including her writing, have enough rest and eat well. This is contrary to what is believed that active lifestyle and physical activities would be helpful to relieve her from her ailing condition. Hence, she constantly complains about the insensitivity and impracticality of her husband to her condition and to her, being a woman. Initially, she described the disconcerting milieu of the story which involves the mansion, the bedroom, the wall, and the window bars. From these elements, she was particularly obsessed with the yellow wallpaper, where patterns and sub-patterns resembled creeping woman who was desperately trying to escape from the wall. Her encounters with the trapped woman behind the wallpaper have worsened her health condition without an immediate action from her husband-physician. In order to liberate that woman, she destroys the paper where she found that there are more creeping women including herself --- crawling and trapped. This unnerving end puts the husband faint which signifies that behind her unstable health condition, a woman's triumph has been achieved against her man.

Method

This paper used descriptive qualitative research in order to unveil the relationship between the reality construed in the *The Yellow Wallpaper*

and the author's her personal life encounter. As Cresswell (2003) mentions, qualitative design is a reflection of the role of the researchers from "drawing an ever-expanding list of types of data sources, using specific protocols for recording the data, analyzing the information through multiple steps of analysis, and mentioning approaches for documenting the accuracy—or validity". The researchers of this study play the role of doing heavy text analysis by following each stage: (1) reading and rereading of the story; (2) encoding of all clauses present in the story; (3) coding of each clause ; (4) identifying participant roles, process types, and circumstances; (5) unveiling the experiential meanings of participant roles, process types and circumstances (6) relating of experiential meanings of participant roles, process types and circumstances to the author's personal life encounter. To ensure the validity of results and to lessen the degree of subjectivity, an inter-coder who has PhD in Linguistics was contacted for independent checking of the assigned process type, participant role and circumstance in each of the clause.

To realize how transitivity was used to analyze the story, sample analysis is given below:

40. So we (actor) took (material) the nursery (goal) at the top of the house (circ: place).

Meanwhile, frequency counts and percentage were applied to show the distribution of the author's choices of process types, participant roles and circumstances (see table 1, table 2, & table 3). Major characters were identified based on the occurrences of processes they produced in the text. The characters with majority number of processes involved were identified as the major characters while the least number of produced processes were tagged as minor characters. All clauses, whether major and minor characters involved, were part of the transitivity analysis.

Apparently, there are only two identified major characters: the *narrator* who plays the sick wife and her husband, *John*, who takes the role of a doctor. Among the mentioned minor characters are *Jenny* (John's sister), *servants*, *the baby*, *the child*, *children*, *nobody*, *one*, *you*, *my brother*, *Mary*, and *friend*. Among the participants, the minor characters register the lowest use of processes having only 60 out of 629.

Results and Discussion

This part of the paper contains the frequency of occurrences of process types, participants' roles and circumstances used in the story *The Yellow*

Wallpaper. It also highlights the relationship between the author's choice of words in the story and her personal life.

Types of Process Used

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of the 629 total transitivity process by the story participants which were classified as major, minor and inanimate characters. Among the involved processes, the story is dominated by the relational process with the total of 166 or 26.39%. It is followed by mental process having 133 or 21.14%. Next is the material process with 121 or 19.24% which is closer to behavioural process having 118 or 18.76%. Verbal process garnered a total frequency of 58 which is equivalent to 9.22%. Among them, existential process received the lowest frequency and percentage of 33 (5.25%).

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage Distributions of Processes Used by Major, Minor, and Inanimate Participants of the Story

Participants	Relational	Mental	Material	Behavioral	Verbal	Existential	Total
Major Characters	55	114	79	65	52	2	367
Minor Characters	11	15	14	10	6	4	60
Inanimate Characters	100	4	28	43	0	27	202
Total	166 (26.39%)	133 (21.14%)	121 (19.24%)	118 (18.76%)	58 (9.22%)	33 (5.25%)	629 (100%)

Interestingly, inanimate characters have considerable use of process which are contributory in understanding the plights of the main characters. Some of them pertain to the house and its parts such as *the greenhouse, the room, the floor, furniture, bed/bedstead/heavy bed, the window, the door, the bars, the wallpaper, the patterns, the color, designs and outlines, the plaster, dim shapes, the faint figure, the paint and paper and a little piece atone corner*. Others pertains to *the sun, moon, ray, lights, and air and sun*. There is also constant use of pronoun "it" and "that" which refer to various ideas such as *phosphate, writing, nervousness, suffering, walking, funny mark, rest, breaking the door, and the voice*. Some of them refer to the body parts like *two eyes, my shoulders and heads*. Others are about particular acts such as *the effort, the habit, sleep, her crawling*. The expressions pertain to the time: *Fourth of July, last night and last day* while

the following refer to the senses: *the smell* and *the look*. Others are in the form of pronouns like *everything* and *nothing*. It is also significant to mention the "*the woman behind it (the wallpaper)*" under inanimate character because of its designated role in the text.

The followings are some of the examples of the transitivity processes used in the story:

- (a) **Relational Process:** John (*Carrier*) is (*Process*) practical (*Attribute*) in the extreme (*Circ:Manner*).
- (b) **Mental Process:** He (*Senser*) loves (*Mental*) me (*Phenomenon*) very dearly (*Circ:Manner*), and hates (*Mental*) to have me sick (*Circ:Clause-Reason*).
- (c) **Material Process:** So we (*Actor*) took (*Material*) the nursery (*Goal*) at the top of the house (*Circ:Location-Place*).
- (d) **Behavioral Process:** So I (*Behaver*) walk (*Behavioral*) a little (*Circ:Manner*) in the garden or down that lovely lane (*Circ:Location-Place*), sit (*Behavioral*) on the porch under the roses (*Circ:Place*), and lie down (*Behavioral*) up here (*Circ:Place*) a good deal (*Circ: Manner*).
- (e) **Verbal Process:** "You know the place is doing you good," (*Verbiage*) he (*Sayer*) said (*Verbal*), "and really, dear, I don't care to renovate the house just for a three months' rental." (*Verbiage*)
- (f) **Existential Process:** There are (*Process*) always new shoots on the fungus, and new shades of yellow all over it (*Existent*).

Types of Participant Roles Used

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage of the participant role which are identified as actor, senser, carrier, behaver, sayer, existent, goal, phenomenon, attribute, receiver and target. The highest among the participant. It has the frequency of 148 or 16.93%. It is followed that

attribute with the frequency of 132 or 15.10% which is closer to the Senser and Actor with 130 (14.87%) and 128 (14.65%), respectively. Target receives the lowest frequency of only 9 or 1.03%.

Table 3
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Participant Roles

Type of Participant	Frequency	Percentage
Carrier	148	16.93%
Senser	130	14.87%
Actor	128	14.65%
Behaver	97	11.10%
Sayer	51	5.84%
Existent	33	3.78%
Attribute	132	15.10%
Goal	78	8.92%
Phenomenon	47	5.38%
Receiver	21	2.40%
Target	9	1.03%
Total	874	100%

In the text, most of the carriers are non-human or inanimate characters such as *the color, the room, the wallpaper, paint and paper, furniture, floor, pattern, faint figure, and the moon* which are repeated in various times and locations of the story. With the dominance of the Carrier, it implies that the descriptions made by the author to her surroundings are clear which powerfully build their significance to the characters especially the protagonist's plight in materializing her goal of achieving women's freedom against patriarchal dominance. Carrier is highly supported by the high frequency of the Attribute. The role of Carrier-Attribute relationship in building clarity of the story setting leads to producing high frequency of Senser which serves as the receiver of the environment the author has built --- mental disturbance and psychological instability.

Circumstances Used

Table 4 presents the frequency and distribution of the kinds of circumstances used in the text. There are a total of 285 circumstances where location ranks the highest with the frequency of 80 or 28.07%; it is followed by manner with 73 or 25.61%.

Table 4
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Kinds of Circumstances

Circumstance	Frequency	Percentage
Location: <i>time, place</i>	80	28.07%
Manner: <i>means, quality, comparison, degree</i>	73	25.61%
Accompaniment: <i>addition, comitative</i>	49	17.19%
Cause: <i>reason, purpose, behalf</i>	30	10.53%
Contingency: <i>condition, default, concession</i>	28	9.82%
Extent: <i>duration, distance, frequency</i>	25	8.77%
Total	285	100%

Circumstances, which appear in the form of prepositional phrases and adverbial phrases or clauses, are commonly considered less significant in terms of their structure but they are powerful tool as well in building well-defined elements of the story (Toolan, 2013). These are used in the form of place, time, means, degree, reason, condition, frequency, etc. In the story analysed, the dominance of location, both time and place play powerfully in shaping the identity of the characters and the way they interact with one another. Hence, the story milieu can bring clear pictures of the protagonist's plight in different places and time. Some of the mentioned locations (place and time) are as follows:

for a while, at the top of the house, in the walls, in a great place on the other side of the room, in some places, here two weeks, there from the house, in these numerous paths and arbors, everywhere, in a toy-store, into that chair, from downstairs, just now, up here, on the porch under the roses, in my mind, up in his arms, upstairs, on the bed, here after all, last night, sometimes, on that undulating wall-paper, now, after each meal, into the room, in the room, the other day, at night, in the daytime, into the room, now, here, all over the house, in the dining-room, in the hall, on the stairs, near the mopboard, round the room, behind every piece of furniture, in the very bright spots, in the very shady spots, in the daytime, on that long road under the trees, under the

blackberry vines, at night, before morning, today, tomorrow, down again, at the wall, that time, downstairs, tonight, home, down into the front path, up here, on the floor, in the road there, behind the pattern, on the ground, on the floor, around the wall, at the door

Similarly, Manner is helpful in describing the character's ordeals in the hands of his own husband. The following are cited by the author:

proudly, cheaply, in the extreme, openly,, personally, by the window, dreadfully, like a broken neck, positively, as the children have made here, as good as gymnastics, diagonally, in great slanting waves of optic horror, like a lot of wallowing seaweeds in full chase, horizontally, wonderfully, awfully, very dearly, just as the sun does, so slowly, by one window or another, softly, gloomily, through the east window, suddenly, quite angry, with a laugh, seriously, hard, through that pattern, privately, secretly, merrily, in amazement, horribly, with derision, as high as my head and half around the room, by my well-hidden rope, smoothly, in the gentlest voice, very quietly, very gently and slowly, by the door, by the wall

Relationship of author's choice of the types of process, participant roles and circumstances to her personal life encounter

The discussion below specifically exemplifies the highlights of the transitivity process type and how each type constructs the relationship of the text and its significant elements to the significant biographical account of the author.

Relational Process

Relational process clauses can "either attribute some quality or status to an entity or to identify the entity as having a particular and defining role or standing" (Toolan, 2013, p. 81). In the analyzed text, it has the dominant process among the registered processes with the total of 166 or 26.39%; most of them were attributed to the inanimate characters. The following verbs were commonly employed: *is, are, am, be, was, wasn't, are not, cannot be, has, have, had, won't be, would be, wouldn't be, seems and seemed*. These greatly help describing the characters as readers were enlightened what kind of woman or wife she is having the following

processes:

[I] am afraid, have schedule prescription, am glad my case is not serious, am awfully lazy, cannot be with him, am tired out, had a friend who was in his hands once, am alone, had no intention of telling him, am securely fastened by my well-hidden rope

With the constant use of the personal pronoun “I”, the wife has a clear but devastating description of the condition of the women during that time. Indeed, having been unnamed protagonist in the story shows the unworthiness of the women who battled silently and helplessly against patriarchal dominions. While this story has built Gilman’s name as a very significant Western feminist, it is also interestingly pointed that her stand on femininity remains unclear when she confessed ‘there is no female mind. The brain is not an organ of sex. Might as well speak of a female liver’ (Gilman, 1898, cited in Rodriguez Salas, 2011, p. 106).

Similarly, relational processes are also instrument in describing her husband having these processes:

[John] is a physician, is practical in the extreme, has no patience with faith, is very careful and loving, is away all day, is right enough, seems very queer sometimes, is so pleased to see me improve, and is so wise

Having these statements, the wife has shown her full submission to her husband being ‘*practical, right, careful, loving and wise*’. Additionally, it is also noteworthy to mention a little of the relational processes that involved minor characters such as “*My brother is also a physician,*” “*Jenny has an inexplicable look,*” “*She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper,*” “*She had a very good report to give,*” and “*Mary is so good with the baby.*” These statements are extensions of her submission to other people in her life; thus, these make her too lose her self-worth as a woman and wife. For Palak (2017), these caused the wife to become too dependent to her husband.

Looking at the participants, it appears that most of the relational processes were carried out by inanimate objects having the frequency of 100 out of 166. Most of the carriers consist of the following: *the patterns, the house, the room, the color, paint and paper, this thing (the design and outlines), dim shapes, the bed, ray, the moon, the smell, last day, the greenhouse, nervousness, two eyes, floor, furniture, the plaster, the heavy bed, the bedstead, the effort, the habit, “the woman behind it (wallpaper)”*,

the Fourth of July, the plaster, life, sleep, air and sun, the windows, the door, the bars and the pronouns “it” and “that” which pertain to phosphate, the writing, walking, breaking of door, the look and rest. Interestingly, the dominant use of house and its parts as carriers further shape the personal identity of the author. True enough, the milieu and all the stuffs that surround the characters build a certain persona; most of the time, they serve as companions in dealing with the challenges of life, while others are silent witnesses to all kinds of human encounters. For instances, the following processes keep our track to figure what kind of environment she has:

[It] is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, was nursery first and then playroom and gymnasium, is dull enough to confuse the eye, [the color] is repellent, is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, is an airy and comfortable room, [the furniture in this room] is no worse than inharmonious, [the floor] is scratched and gouged and splintered, [the plaster itself] is dug out here and there, [this bedstead] is fairly gnawed and the bars are too strong even to try

In the study made by Ghandeharion and Mazari (2016), the place that the narrator describes in the story is but a prison cell, and she herself is incarcerated and is being supervised by his physician in order for her to behave the way he wants her to. However, the expected behaviour turns into madness as a result of the “imbalanced power structure present in the society at the time between men and women” (Gilman, cited in Ghandeharion and Mazari, 2016, p. 117). Rodriguez Salas (2011) also linked the description of the house to a prison: *‘the windows are barred for little children’*. As a result of being a domestic prisoner, she became so fanatical of the yellow wallpaper and its masculine significance.

The following relational processes further help us understand the serious condition of the narrator while staying in the chosen place of her husband. Her encounter with the wallpaper and the “woman” that appears to be a very detrimental case that worsens her physical, emotional and mental conditions: *[This wall-paper] has a kind of sub-pattern in a, different shade, is always the same shape, is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern, [the faint figure behind] seemed to shake the pattern, [the color] is hideous enough, and unreliable enough, and infuriating enough, [the pattern] is torturing, it is like a bad dream, [the outside pattern] is a florid arabesque, [the woman behind it] is as plain as can be, by daylight she is subdued, quiet, [it] is so puzzling, in the*

daytime it is tiresome and perplexing, [it] is the same woman , [it] is awful, [it] is the strangest yellow.

With such scenario in her life, she has developed mixed emotion which make the readers feel so difficult to further see her in that house or room:

these nervous troubles are dreadfully depressing, it is only nervousness, I would not be so silly as to make him uncomfortable just for a whim, it is so discouraging not to have any advice and companionship about my work, it is so hard to talk with John about my case, it is so pleasant to be out in this great room

In this study, it is obvious that relational process gives a clarity of everything that surrounds the character; hence, with the direct and real description, this transitivity process leads the readers to easily capture the elements of the story in relation to the reality of the participants. For example, Ghandeharion and Mazari (2016) consider the wallpaper as the embodiment of feminine discourse (p. 124) which appear to be revolting but the reality, as emphasized by every line, corner and design of the wall, is that women are literally oppressed by the powerful presence of men in the society. They further discussed the essay of Treichler (1984) that the wallpaper “represents (1) the narrator’s own mind, (2) the narrator’s unconscious, (3) the “pattern” of social and economic dependence which reduces women to domestic slavery” (p. 124). For Chalak and Helan (2018), the *color* pertains to the “corrupt society of the time” where woman lived under the control of powerful men.

Mental Process

Mental process always requires either human or humanlike participant that serves as the doer of the verb and the target of the process (Toolan, 2013, p. 81). The doer is called the senser while the target is the phenomenon (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Hence, someone’s experience is related through inner means like thoughts and feelings and not necessarily through an action (Eggins, 2004; Hemas & Ariyanti, 2016). In this study, this transitivity process receives 133 or 21.14%. The common processes used are the following: *expects, see, does not believe, assures, believe, think, don’t like, wanted, feel, should hate, suppose, remember, don’t mind, don’t know, never thought, heard, wonder, hated, didn’t realize, was looking, know, thought, feel, forgot, loves, hates, imagine and the like.*

Mental processes play significantly in the text; indeed, it is the highest in frequency and percentage involving the major characters; most of them are associated to the wife (narrator) who expressed her longing to do a number of activities work which she believed is helpful to recover from her sickness but those desires were totally contradicted by her physician husband. This started when she said, "*Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good.*" She intensified that claim when she said that "*I sometimes fancy that in my condition, if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus.*" We can imagine her strong willingness to do other more interesting stuffs like writing that she always wanted to do and to engage in other physical activities she could do to be relieved but there are villains that control her including her very own loving husband. For Rodriguez Salas (2011), the use of "personally" suggests that despite her low reputation in their home, she managed to have her own voice and judgment.

"I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would relieve the press of ideas and rest me."

Her life is just secluded in *a colonial mansion, a hereditary estate* or perhaps *a haunted house* which she appreciated in the beginning of their stay when she described it *the most beautiful place with a delicious garden*. Indeed, she *never saw such a garden --- large and shady, full of box-bordered paths, and lined with long grape-covered arbors*. But the room they stayed in that house is another story, she *didn't like* it because she *wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings*. Again, Ghandeharion and Mazari (2016) called it her very own prison cell supervised by no less than his husband and doctor. Similarly, the house implies as well a limited activity of women; hence, the roles assigned to them are limited to motherhood and housekeeping any social engagement (Kuhl, 2018, cited in Chalak & Helan, (2018).

In the end, however, these remains a dream because *John would not hear* any of her wish. Going back to their room, she started to *see a strange, provoking formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design* which she *never saw a worse paper in my life: she doesn't it, she should hate it, she hates to see it creeping slowly*. This encounter has worsened her condition when her attention has been caught by the yellow thing – the yellow wallpaper --- *not beautiful ones like buttercups, but old foul, bad yellow things* and that's the *only thing she can think of*. With the mystery of the paper, she *wonders how it was done and who did it and what they did it for*. She admitted that she *knows a little of the principle of design, and she knows this thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alternation, or repetition, or*

symmetry, or anything else that she ever heard of. For a long time, she didn't realize what the thing was that showed behind, that dim sub-pattern, but now she is quite sure it is a woman. Sometimes she thinks there are a great many women behind the paper, and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over. She believes that that woman gets out in the daytime as she can see her out of her windows. She even wonders if they all come out of that wall-paper. She sees her on that long road under the trees creeping alone. She never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before.

She was in emotional outburst having this scary encounter with the "woman behind the yellow paper". This does not make her condition better as various thoughts have already troubled her mind: *she doesn't like to look out of the window seven -- there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast; she doesn't want to go outside. She even wished he (John) would take her away from their place or even take another room. Worst among them, she thought of seriously burning the house!*

On the other hand, John has another stand as a *physician of high standing, he assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression -- a slight hysterical tendency.*

But John does not know how much I really suffer.

Letting him know what bothers his wife, he simply told her that it was just a *draught* and she just needs to *shut the window* but as doctor who assumes of medical conditions of his wife, he assures her that *there is no reason to suffer* and this professional statement from a medical practitioner *satisfies him*. Of course, *John knows that she doesn't sleep very well at night; but her wife hated to waken him and watched the moonlight on that undulating wallpaper because she meant to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort she wanted to give him knowing her condition was already a comparative burden.* In the end, she just *thinks* that whatever she feelings *is due to her nervous condition.* At any rate, her husband *he loves her very dearly; he just hates to see her sick; she even feels basely ungrateful not to value the care John has shown.*

With the forceful manner of living domestically, they further discussed that these medical practices would not do any good to any patient but a mere isolation from her world. Additionally, when the wife mentioned of a woman behind the wall, Treichler, (1984, cited in Ghandeharion and Mazari, 2016) said that she represents (1) the narrator herself, gone mad, (2) the narrator's unconscious, (3) all women" (p. 124).

Accordingly, she was diagnosed by her doctor having postpartum

depression. With the lack of advanced treatment to any psychological condition like depression, doctors during that time merely recommended their patients to:

“Live as domestic a life as possible. Have your child with you all the time. Lie down an hour after every meal. Have but two hours intellectual life a day. And never touch pen, brush or pencil as long as you live” (Gilman, 1935, cited in Ghandeharion and Mazari, 2016)

The study of Chalak and Helan (2018) gives a clearer discussion of this disease. Based on the description used in the text, this poor nervous condition is most probably neurasthenia in the 18th century having symptoms like “visible swelling of the stomach, headaches, fainting, palpitations of the heart, long fainting, wind in the stomach and intestines, frequent sighing, giddiness, watching, convulsive crying, convulsive laughing, despair, and melancholy” (Wayne, 2008, p. 131 cited in Chalak & Helan, 2018). They added that this is caused by the narrator’s giving of birth, but the encounter with the yellow wallpaper and the sexist treatment have even worsened her depression.

Overall, the use of mental processes in the text support the understanding of the readers in penetrating the reality of the narrator’s inner suffering. These processes further invite them to live with the character and join his mental plights. Hence, the description of the characters’ inner world can be instrumental to change their external world (Salayo & Macam, 2019).

Material Process

Material process refers to the clause of action which is either concrete or abstract. Hence, an action which is made or done by an entity or entities to another entity or entities is something physical, observable or tangible (Eggins, 2004; Toolan, 2013). In this text, material process the total of 121 or 19.24% from the total of 329 transitivity processes. Most of them were executed by the major characters. Some of the verbs include: *do, take, did write, makes, get, took, can write, didn’t do, might do, have discovered, shakes, have watched, pulled, shook, will take, gathered, have mastered, cultivates, find, must get, have locked, can’t put, pound, pulled, silenced, call, lock, have found.*

These processes show how the narrator describes her strong will to do some physical activities behind her poor health conditions. Initially, she highlights the goal on writing: *I did write for a while in spite of them; but I can write when she is out.* While she believes that writing can alleviate her suffering, it is treated by her doctor otherwise; hence, he asked her to stop fancy stuffs including writing. In the account written by Vertinsky

(2010), her desire of doing some physical activities or fitness is her way to achieve her freedom or autonomy; hence, the disapproval of her doctor, who is at the same her husband, is a direct manifestation of women's lack of emancipation in the real picture of the world during her time. Indeed, she could claim to have been cured from depression not just her struggles to have sound health but it was greatly attributed to her love of gymnastics. In the same manner, her constant expression of her desire toward writing is her personal fight in creating women "identity and equality" (p. 58). In the study conducted by Ghandeharion and Mazari (2016), the idea of writing is Gilman's way of giving warning to her physician, Dr. S. Weir Mitchel, about his misdiagnosis to the condition of the women.

Similarly, these processes connect to her suffering when she *has discovered something* --- that is the woman behind the yellow wallpaper: *I have watched her. I will follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion even if it makes her tired to follow it. Then I peeled off all the paper I could reach standing on the floor. She further described, they connect diagonally and the sprawling outlines run off in great slanting waves. The woman behind shakes it. They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside down, and makes their eyes white!* The woman is described to be a dangerous one as the narrator said *it slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you.* Her fear is temporarily calm down by simply locking the door.

In this text, material processes support mental processes in a way that the narrator's goal is to give justice to her mental state; that is to achieve something which may be helpful to relieve her pains. For instance, when the narrator *has locked the door* in a dramatic ending of the story shows her "resistance against her patriarchal society" (p. 134) while *throwing the key* gives a strong message to John that he is among those corrupt men in the society who abused the weakness of the women; hence, the use of the circumstance *into the front path* is saving John that while there is still a time, he has to find and retrieve himself from such acts against women (Chalak & Helan, 2018). The ending of the story becomes dramatic that behind the shown insanity, there is a strong confrontation on patriarchal statute when John *faints* signifying the establishment of the wife's voice and freedom (Palak, 2017).

Behavioral Process

Behavioral process is said to be an "intermediate between mental and material process but much closer to the latter. It is specifically physiological and psychological behavior where participant, mostly human, behaves or does the action neither intentionally nor accidentally"

(Toolan, 2013, p. 83). With its near-verbal, -mental, and -material clauses, these processes can usually hard to determine (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). There were 118 (18.76%) transitivity behavioural processes. The following processes help us understand the natural action of the characters: *[John] laughs, I...talk, [I] am sitting, he laughs, I cry, I walk, John was asleep, [I thought] I was asleep, the sun shoots, the moon shines, he laughed a little, I don't sleep much, it creeps, she crawls, her crawling shakes, nobody could climb through that pattern, it strangles, she laughed, we shall asleep, you have to creep.*

Looking the selected behavioral processes, several processes were used several times. These include *laughs (laughed), sleep (was asleep, don't sleep, shall sleep), creeps, (can creep, have to creep)* and *crawls*. Interestingly, processes that show privilege and right as the same time like *sleep* and *laugh* were attributed to the husband. On the contrary, those mentioned transitivity processes linked to the wife include *talk, am sitting, walk* and *cry* which appears to be her life cycle in her own room. The use of behavioral processes in this text keeps the readers feel the true human instinct of the characters in dealing with another either human or non-human.

Processes associated to John show that as a husband and doctor, he does not like to extend his understanding to his wife, a woman. He merely *laughs* at her poor condition and discomfort because it produces his own comfort and happiness (Chalak & Helan, 2018).

Verbal Process and Existential Process

Verbal process are clauses of communicating including the process of reporting, saying, telling, etc. While verbal process is usually attributed to human participant, inanimate characters can also perform this transitivity process (Toolan, 2013, p. 84). The participants involved are the speaker, and the receiver or addressee while the statement of the verbal process is called the verbiage (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014; Mehmood, Amber, Ameer, & Faiz, 2014). As shown in Table 1, verbal processes have the frequency of 58 (9.22%). Most of the verbs used include *said, would say, says, tell, told* and *ask*.

The identified verbal processes were mostly delivered by the husband. His dominant character has been carried out by a number of dialogues which show his ruling presence in their home. However, the dominance of the husband is not measured by the harshness of words; indeed, the narrator agrees that John cares and loves her and that makes her even afraid of him. In fact, every time he told something on his wife, he addressed her as *my dear, darling, his comfort, little girl* and *little blessed goose*.

According to Vertinsky (2010), this sweet “imprisoning and infantilizing experiences” (p. 58) with a medical practitioner that greatly suffered her understanding on health and medical issues; hence, this implicit male dominance can endanger lives during her time. Citing Wagner-Martin (1989) and Friedan (1977) by Ghandeharion and Mazari (2016), addressing the wife as such is another issue of gender role as she was treated like a childish young girl who lack understanding of her future and such women’s infantilization creates identity crisis. In a literal to worst understanding, women as just small young girls “whose goal is to give birth to a future generation of more babies” (p. 122). She is even considered an animal with that “little blessed goose”.

Another case is despite his busy schedule as physician, he would manage to visit her *solely on her account*. Aside from the right food and air that she needed, he always emphasized that being a nervous patient, she must keep herself well by *giving way to such fancies*.

He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency.

But contrary to what he dearly expressed, his wife remained weak and afraid of so many strange things around especially the wallpaper, he passively addressed her worries where prescriptions were just a mere mind setting.

On her part, her statements usually remain in her mind as because of her submissiveness, her poor health condition, her fear and perhaps her “love”. There are some meaningful utterances she made like the following *let us go downstairs, there are such pretty rooms there, I wish he would me away, I don’t weigh a bit more nor as much and my appetite may be better in the evening when you are here, but worse in the morning when you are away*. But his love and kindness remain without action on her few words. But not until the end of the story when she tried to lock the door and John could not open it. When he did, he was surprised to what he saw: she was *creeping just the same, but she looked at him over her shoulder*. She simply said, *"I've got out at last in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!"* Now the man has *fainted*. Ghandeharion & Mazari (2016) stated that the wife decided not to go out of the room as expected and continue to live by preserving the communion of her family and her future with her society.

Another significant thing mentioned above is her request to change their room but not well received by the husband. According to Chalak and

Helan (2018), the mere fact that the narrator's request to change their room means that she, as a wife, is even recognized to make even a smallest decision.

Behind its low frequency as compared to others, verbal frequency is supportive of establishing the real intention of the characters. These are reflective in the choice of their dialogues. However, in this text, this verbal process provokes the readers to further discover those intentions. Salayo and Macam (2019) believe that the use of verbal process is a revelation of the participants as they themselves produce the actual and authentic source of information.

Existential process is "introduced by *there* which represent that someone or something exists or has happened" (Toolan, 2013, p. 84). This process is seen to be to the least among the employed transitivity processes in the text. It only has the total frequency of 33 or 5.25%. This process was used by the author by using *is*, *are*, *was* and *were*. With the lowest frequency recorded, this type of transitivity process does not prove its worth as far as its relation to the story is concern. Besides, most of the existents refer to the inanimate characters which perhaps are instrumental in building wife's life story but not that strong to create the authentic features of her life.

Conclusion

Transitivity analysis has effectively brought the readers into the world of the characters in the story; similarly, this linguistic mode of analysis helped build the connection of the story to the life story of the author. Having dominated by relational processes (26.39%), which are played by the inanimate characters, shows that the milieu that serves as the ground of the inanimate characters powerfully contributed to the plight of the characters. Relational processes give a clear description of what kind of world the characters have; indeed, these processes enclosed every character to their identified persona. Mental processes, with 21.14%, shape the world of the main character, the wife. Through these, the readers were able to read her mind, her heart and her soul that constitute to her fight against women's poor social treatment. The third among the processes was material with 19.24%. These processes appear to be the result of relational's cruelty and mental's suffering as the material processes produce physical action in order to achieve changes that cause the mental distress of the wife.

Among the types of participants, the highest percentage was carrier (16.93%), followed by attribute (15.10%). These two proves their consistency with the high frequency of relational processes that brings life to the story milieu. Senser, with 14.87%, shows how inner activities of the

characters work; it was supported by the actor (14.65%) that materialize actions to meet the goal of the characters. While circumstances appear less significant, location and manner, 28.07% and 25.61%, respectively created a connection between the story setting and the manner of doing the thoughts, decisions and actions of the characters.

Transitivity system could best work in any literary approaches. It is noteworthy that in this study, biographical approach to literacy criticism blends well with transitivity to understand the experience of the author and the meanings of language which are not explicit to the readers. This claim is affirmed by a number of linguists since transitivity can ‘shed more light on the use of language in a literary text’ (Nguyen, 2012, p86). Likewise, this study is taking transitivity into another level of working to a purely literary tool which enables the readers to produce an objective interpretation of text. Findings also reveal that biographical criticism and transitivity could actually read the author’s mind, her experience of the world, her own consciousness, what goes around her, and inside her (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Language teachers can bring literary analysis into a whole-new-level of teaching literary interpretation in a lesser subjective way. The demarcation of literary criticism from linguistics analysis may be given emphasis among learners. As literary criticism takes the meaning of the text from artistic thoughts and transitivity deconstructs language use from its structure (Ahmed & Abdulmughni, 2019), they could actually work together, for as long as both teachers and learners have complete understanding of how they are used for literary interpretation. It is highly suggested that other forms of literary criticism like feminism could also be used, together with transitivity, to understand Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper*.

References

- Ahmed, S. & Abdulmughni, S. (2019). Stylistics, literary criticism, linguistics and discourse analysis. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 9 (2), 412-428. doi:10.5539/ijel.v9n2p412.
- Castello, D. (March 2014). A comparison of three recipes using systemic functional grammar (Master's thesis). University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kindom.
- Chalak, G. R. & Helan, S. A. (2018). The helpless angel in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, 6(3), 130-136.
- Creswell, J. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Eggs, S. (2004). *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Ghandeharion, A. & Mazari, M. (2016). Women entrapment and flight in Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper". *Alicante Journal of English Studies*, 29, 113-129.
- Halliday, M.A.K., & Matthiessen, C. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar* (3rd Ed.). London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K., & Matthiessen, C. (2014). *An introduction to functional grammar* (4th Ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Hemas, L. & Ariyanti, S.M. (2016). Transitivity and ideology in Emma Watson's speech for the Heforshe campaign (Critical Discourse Analysis). *Language Horizon*, 1 (11), 27-37.
- Mehmood, A., Amber, R., Ameer, S. & Faiz, R. (2014). Transitivity analysis: Representation of love in Wilde's "The Nightingale and the Rose". *European Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 2(4), 78-85.
- Moety, D. A. (2015) American political discourse as manifested in Hillary Clinton's interviews: A critical approach. *English Linguistics Research*, 4(1), 1-13.
- Nguyen, H.T. (2012). Transitivity analysis of "Heroic Mother" by Hoa Pham. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 2(4), 85-100. doi: 10.5539/ijel.v2n4p85
- Palak, M. (2017). The woman behind the Yellow Wallpaper. *International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities*, 5(9), 212-221.

- Qorih, D (2018). Ideational meaning of HIV AIDS slogans: A systemic functional linguistic study. *English Education and Applied Linguistics Journal*, 1(1), 82-91.
- Rodriguez Salas, G. (2011, November 16-18). *Just as a scientific hypothesis: The literary language of madness in Charlotte Perkins Gilma's 'The Yellow Wallpaper'*. Paper presented at the XXXV AEDEAN Conference, Barcelona.
- Salayo, J.D. & Macam, A.L. (2019). Exploring character delineation: A transitivity analysis of O. Henry's 'A Retrieved Reformation'. *Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 7, 151-168.
- Simpson, P. (2005). *Language, ideology and point of view*. Taylor & Francis e-Library. London: Routledge.
- The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica (2020). Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Encyclopedia Britanica, Inc.
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charlotte-Perkins-Gilman>
(Retrieved April 18, 2020).
- To, V., Lê, Q., & Lê, T. (2015). Applying Halliday's linguistic theory in qualitative data analysis. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 15(2), 135-146. doi:DOI10.1108/QRJ-11-2014-0059
- Toolan, M. (2013). *Language in literature: An introduction to stylistics*. New York: Routledge.
- Vathanalaotha, K., & Tangkiengsirisin, S. (2018). Transitivity analysis of rhetorical moves in dental research article abstracts. *Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Studies*, 18(3), 639-662.
- Vertinsky, P. (2001). A militant Madonna: Charlotte Perkins Gilman – Feminism and Physical Culture. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 18(1). doi: dx.doi.org/10.1080/714001497.
- Xenia, T. (2014). A transitivity analysis of Miranda in "Sexy": The character in Jhumpa Lahiri's Story. *14(2)*

This page is intentionally left blank