



Stylistic Analysis of Charles Lamb's Essay *Dream Children*: Application of Transitivity Model

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Abstract

This paper aims at the stylistic analysis of “*Dream Children; A Reverie*”, an essay by Charles Lamb. In this research, the researcher applies transitivity as an ideational function of language. The theory of transitivity consists of verbal processes and participant entities. The processes include material, verbal, relational, mental, behavioral, and existential along with their participant entities. The researcher identifies ideational function of language which is used by the author in his essay. Then the researcher relates the ideational function to the thematic stances of the essay such as loneliness, nostalgia, psychology of children and loss and regret. Apart from these, the researcher quantifies the verbal processes used in the essay and then categorized them into verbal, mental, relational, material, existential and behavioral processes. As result, the study uncovers semantico-grammaticality of the essay and the use of language skills to convey the social experiences and life of the author.

Keywords: stylistics, transitivity processes, analysis

Introduction

Stylistics is a branch of linguistics which studies the characteristics of situationally-distinctive uses of language with particular reference to literary language, and tries to establish principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by the individual and social groups in their use of language. Style of can be studied from various viewpoints and various stylistic approaches. The most common approaches are formalistic stylistics and Systematic Functional Grammar. Then in Systematic Functional Grammar, importance has been given to transitivity to stylistically interpret the text or essay.

Here in this research paper, the researcher has applied transitivity to the essay of Charles Lamb “*Dream Children: A Reverie*”. The theory of transitivity which has been proposed by Halliday. The main focus of the theory is to analyze the text from stylistics perspective that how the system of language contributes not only linguistically but also contributes functionally and semantically. There are various processes such as mental, material, existential, relational,



behavioral which reveal the hidden potential meanings within the language or text which has been composed by the author. These meanings build up and give rise into various themes intended by the writer. Both the meaning and lexical choices are responsible for the context of the text. Language is not an independent medium, but it is directly or indirectly linked with socio-cultural experiences of a person's life. When a writer is composing a text, he is choosing his words according to the semantic pressure his experiences which are always there.

Charles Lamb is known as the Prince of English essays who is still read in this modern world. He uses simple yet complex sentences in his essays. In his essay he reflected his past life along with his dreams and desires. He felt nostalgic about his life and regretted about his loss of happiness when he fails to live stable life. Throughout his life he remained single despite of his love with Alice. He was rejected by her for seven years long. In his essay, he used ideational verbal processes with necessary skills in the use of language and lexical choices. It made him able to convey his semantic and thematic meanings in his essay in an effective and suitable manner to the reader.

Research Questions

- 1) What are the patterns of ideational realization from semantico-grammatical perspective in the essay *Dream Children; A Reverie* by Charles Lamb?
- 2) How the theory of Transitivity as an ideational function of language contributes to its thematic stances?
- 3) How the writer uses the various processes of transitivity such as material, mental, verbal, behavioral, existential, and relational process to form the major characters in the essay?

Objectives of the Research

- 1) To identify the patterns of ideational realization of the essay *Dream Children; A Reverie* by Charles Lamb from semantico-grammatical perspective.
- 2) To find out the ideational functional process of language such as material, mental, verbal, behavioral, existential, relational, and mental.
- 3) To apply the theory of transitivity as an ideational functional of language in order to uncover its thematic stances in the essay



Delimitation of the Research

This study is delimited to the application of ideational function of language in transitivity theory. Moreover, the researcher has only taken the themes of loneliness, nostalgia, psychology of children and loss and regret from the selected short story.

Methodology

The study at hand is descriptive in nature. In it, the researcher takes the text and analyses it from the perspective of the ideational function of language in transitivity theory, which is a theory proposed by Michael Halliday. The themes of loneliness, nostalgia, psychology of children and loss and regret are described first, and then various transitivity processes are analysed. Furthermore, the study also contain the statistical analysis of the various processes used in the short story.

Themes of the Essay

Children Psychology

In the essay, Charles Lamb depicting the psychology of the children, when he is narrating the stories to their children Alice and John. He also switches to talk about their reaction to the stories, for instance, "...here Alice's little right foot played an involuntary movement, till, upon my looking grave, it desisted". This extract displays children impatient nature and involuntary behaviors. When he is narrating to her it is building in her mind and she shows her inner condition of mind through her body language. Same is the case with his son. When he hears the story about two infants spirits in the bigger house, he tries to show him brave and courageous by sitting in upright position but his eyes staggered due fear. Another example is "Here John slyly deposited back upon the plate a bunch of grapes," it shows that when you put food in front of children, they will never control their selves. It will always abate their attention. Once they saw anything to eat their desire compel them react which show their natural response and innocence of their nature. Even when in the last portion of the section when they attached emotionally to the story of John and then his death they further ask for detail of their mother.

Nostalgic effect



Charles Lamb as autobiographical writer, he depicted his life. Lamb reflects in his essays that he felt nostalgic about his family, his love, grandmother, brother and his childhood which he had spent with his grandmother.

Loneliness

The theme of the loneliness appears at end when he says that “We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice called Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence and a name”

Here in these lines, lamb shifts his happy children story to gloom and showed that all these happiness were desires and dream, He found himself dreaming in the chair and a solitude.

Regret and Loss for the Unfulfilled Joy

In his essays he portrayed his regret and loss in the form of the house with “carved mantle that a foolish person pulled...down” and also when her grandmother and bother John both pass away, he happiness ravished away with them. They both died with painful death while lamb left alone to bear the painful and pathetic tragedy.

Second regret is in the form of Alice. Lamb says that he loved her for seven years but fail to win her love. It is reason that in last he confused, and he cannot differentiate the dreamed Alice and real Alice. It affected his mind and showed the loss of a failure to materialize his love. In last he used the words “The children who never were” show a surprise twist in its ending with the beginning. In the beginning he tells stories of joy and regret at last he calls of these stores phantoms of a dream unfulfilled.

Literature Review

According to Simpson (2004), stylistics is a method of textual interpretation in which importance is given to language. In stylistics analysis, much emphasis is given to language on the reasons that language is composed of various forms, pattern, structure, and levels which constitute linguistic structures which are crucial elements of the function of language. This functional significance of language helps a stylistician in the interpretation of a text. According to traditional belief that a stylistician is a simple, dull and boring grammarian his job is find out noun, verb,



adjective, adverb, etc. in a text. Contrary to this traditional belief is the modern concept of stylistics which focuses on the interpretation of text with help of linguistic suits which follow specific models and pathways in the analysis of texts. In other words, stylistics is interested in language as a function of text in its context. It acknowledges that a text produced in a particular time, place, and social-cultural environment with due attention to the cognition of the writer when he is composing the text or texts.

In literary stylistics, the focus is given to find out the implicit and explicit relationship between language and artistic function of language. The stylistician tries to use different linguistic tools to uncover the hidden potential meanings within the literary text (Leech & Short, 2001). Style is a broader term which has several meanings varying according to different contexts. The way something is being displayed or presented is what makes it a style. It could also refer to a person's way of living his life. In literary terms we can say that style is the way how a person expresses and transfers his thoughts into words using different patterns.

Stylistics is a branch of applied linguistics in which the focus is given to the study of style and the placement of words within text to give specific patterns and forms. According to the opinion of Widdowson (1975) that in stylistics our focus is centered on the linguistic distribution of literary discourse in the form of discourse and context. He says that stylistics does not study the linguistic orientation, but it also looks for the aspects of linguistics and literary uniqueness which play an essential role in the understanding of meaning of the text in which a stylistician is doing the surgery of the text. According to Carter (1989), style is related to the choice made by the author. It is the creator of the text who carefully uses his skills in an artistic way and embeds his reality of his life and reflected back the essence of social surroundings. Haynes (1989) pins his idea about the function of stylistics is to study of different stances in the text and how it shows deviation from the idea which has been said rather it could be portrayed by the text. Another stylistician, Laval (1997) declares that a stylistician can make use of the models of sociolinguistics in a stylistic analysis of a text because sociolinguistics also dissects the relation of society to the language used by creator of text. In stylistics, the stylistician, is exploring the social function of language which can be searched out easily with help of sociolinguistics.



Kroger and Wood (2000) elaborated their opinion about the role of writers who are creating the pieces of prose, poetry or any sort of text. They consciously or unconsciously aware of his skills in the use of language. They mold the characters or situations according to their own linguistic and semantic choices to convey their intended meaning that want to give to their readers. They are also quite aware that language is not a medium through which we communicate only but it is a special treasure of keeping our true experiences and reality of life to guide other reader to enjoy and get guidance.

It has been seen that most of the researchers had applied foregrounding theories to analyze texts stylistically. Especially, they are applying various theoretical models on poems, fictions, and novels, but they never tried to apply transitivity theory on essays. Therefore, here in this research, the researcher analyzes stylistically the essay of Charles Lamb “*Dream Children: A Reverie*” to fill this gap. For this research, Charles Lam is known as the Prince of English essays, the researcher has chosen his essay. In his essay he used his power in form language to reflect the social reality which he had experienced. Transitivity as ideational functions of language enables the researcher to uncover the potential power of the author and uncover the semantic-loudness of language used by Charles Lamb.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of transitivity has been proposed by Halliday. It uncovers the main linguistic feature of certain literary texts to get intended meaning used in a text. According to Halliday, transitivity functions as a part of ideational function in the clause of a text or texts. The ideational function of the clause helps a language used to convey and transfer his thoughts and ideas. He says that the processes conveyed with the help of language is the outcome of our experience, or conception about world. These experiences or conception about world is expressed in art of language with semantic system of attention to grammar of the clause. There are three components of semantic processes which are expressed through clause. The first component is the process itself which is expressed with help of verb phrase in clause of text. The second component of semantic process is the participants of the clause which performs different roles of the entities. Sometimes it involves directly, in other words the person that does something, behaves, or says. The



participants can be humans and can be objects. Normally it can be found as noun phrase in a clause. The third one is circumstances which are related to the verbal process. The position can be in form of adverbial or prepositional phrase.

There are various processes which can be classified into material, relational, mental, verbal, behavioral, and existential processes, and for each of these processes it is carried out by their own participants' roles.

Material process is that type of processes in which the material form or physical world is involved. It takes actor as an obligatory element which performs the action or process. In this process, the affected object is known as goal. It can be an optional element in this material process. Circumstance is the third element of this process which shows us where, when, how, and why, in other words, it helps us in providing information such as manner, place, time, extent, matter, duration, condition, and means etc. of the material process in text.

Next process is relational processes which are dealing with an abstract relation with other participants. It does not affect other participants physically. Within this relation there are further sub-dividing but here the researcher applies two of the processes such as attributive and identifying processes. Attributive appears such as "y is an attribute of x". Identifying is in the form of "y is the identity of x". The carrier is always realized by a noun or nominal phrase, and the attributive is known through an adjective or a nominal phrase. It cannot be changed into passive voice because it includes only one independent noun or nominal noun. On the other hand, intensive identifying process can change into passive voice because it consists of two independent nouns or nominal phrases known as token and value.

The next process is mental process. In this process cognition of the participant or participants are involved in the process. The participant who is going through this mental process is a sensor while the phenomena is going within the mind or perceiving is known as phenomena. It has been categorized into three types. First one is cognitions which includes verbs related to thinking, knowing, and understanding. The second one is related to verbs of affections which are liking, loving, fearing, and hating. The last category is of perception which embodies the verbs of seeing, hearing, etc.



The process used in transitivity analysis is verb processes. It is the process of saying something. Verbal process is the process in which something is saying or said in extended sense unlike mental processes. The speaker of the verbal process is called Sayer while to whom it is addressed or to whom it is said is known as “Target” while what is said is Verbiage.

Behavioral process in another process used by Halliday in his systematic functional grammar which are processes concerned with psychological and physiological behavior. These processes are practical forms of the inner mental process of participant or participants. The participant who expresses his or her inner feeling in action form is known as Behavior.

The last process in transitivity theory is called Existential processes. As the names indicates that it is the process of existing of something or happening of something. Exist is the object or event that are said to be exist or available. The word “there” functions as a subject but it has not significant role in the process.

Discussion and Analysis

Before applying the theory of transitivity, it would be appropriate to pen briefly about the author and write short summary of the poem. Charles Lamb was born on February 10th, 1775. He was considered as the Prince among English essayists. Apart from this, he was a famous poet and literary critic of Welsh origin. He was remembered as an expert of Shakespeare age who wrote with his talent and intellect. Most of the time he reflected his own life in his writing. Though his use of language looks simple, but yet shows inner dept and hidden meaning to explore from various angles. During his life, his famous work were Essays of Elia and Tales from Shakespeare.

The title of the essays is Dream Children: A Reverie. In his essays he says that children show interest to listen about their elders. When lamb was narrating to them the past stories, they always loved to sit closer to the narrator. It was the routine of the children every night to hear about their great uncle, granddame, and great-grandmother Field. The Children of Elia, John and Alice asked him to narrate the life of their great-grandmother, Mrs. Field who had lived in very bigger house in Norfolk. This house belongs to a wealthy nobleman who gave keepership of this house to grandmother. She looked after the house as her own property. There were living two children along with his uncle who went through tragic accident. The story was told to them by the children



in the wood. The story was told when they were sitting together under the wooden chimney pieces later replaced with a marble chimney piece. Alice felt upset when she hears the replacement of the old chimney because it embodied emotional attachment where her grandmother had lived. Alice showed her anger through her expressing just like her mother. When the old house vanished with the death of Mrs. Field, the noble person took all the ornaments and used it in the new house. These old ornaments looked awkward just as the beautiful tombs of Westminster Abbey would look out place if it kept in drawing room. The author says that things look good when it arranged in proper order and harmony. John, his son was enjoying the story and smiled as if he also felt that it is odd to put thing in such order.

Grandmother was very nice. She devoted her also religion and she read the book The Book of Psalm, in the Old Testament. Even she memorized a part of the book by heart. Here did not show her interest for the reason that she did not know about religion as her grandmother did. There were two infant spirits living in the bigger house, but grandmother never felt fear from them and slept alone but Elia felt fear as result she used to sleep with her maid. John tried to show that he also does not fear but his eyes shows that he fears spirits. When grandmother died many people from neighbor and some of the gentry and nobles joined her funeral. She also remained a decent dancer in her young age. Here Alice was moving her leg involuntary and showed her interest in dancing. Elia used to come here in holiday. She looked upon the bust of twelve caesars and had a gentle walk in the garden where she observed the beauty of the fruits in their trees such as peaches, oranges, nectars, and other. Here a plate was put in front of him and disguise that he also never tempted by fruits. Grandmother Field loved John more than children in their family. John was lovely, used to ride, and interested in outdoor activities. As Jame Elia was lame footed, he used to take him outside on his back, but later John pass away and Jame missed him a lot. The children felt with emotions and feeling and asked to talk about the dead mother. Their father told them that how she loved their mother for seven long years. He tried to her love and failed to do so. He also explained the reasons to them for not marrying her in his life. When father look to Alice, he saw her as her mother depiction. Thereafter the children grow fainter and fainter and seem that



they were not children of Alice nor him. He had fallen sleep and was daydreaming, James Elia had disappeared, and the chair was occupied only by Charles Lamb.

Application of Transitivity

Here the researcher, firstly, identify the ideational processes used by the author such as material, mental, relational, mental, behavioral, existential processes. In the essay Charles Lamb has used lengthy and complex sentences. The squares brackets be used to represent various processes and participants entities involve in function along with circumstances, verbiages, and manners. To avoid plagiarism, the researcher, cannot keep here the practical application of transitivity on the text. Therefore, the reader can find this applied form in the appendix of this research paper.

Statistical Calculation

Statistical calculation of the processes which have been found in the essay. All the process were counted down then they were compared with themes of the essay. It show us that how the writer uses his power in these process to legate the ideational functional of his language and his experiences in intended context of the language.

Frequency of the verbal processes in the Essay

| Mental | Material | Existential | Relational | Behavioral | Verbal |
|--------|----------|-------------|------------|------------|--------|
| 30 | 29 | 3 | 32 | 29 | 12 |

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Total number of processes} &= 30+29+3+32+29+12 \\ &= 125 \text{ verbal processes} \end{aligned}$$

Linking these Processes to the Themes of the Essay

Charles lamb is known for his subjective writing. He mostly reflected his past life in his works. Here in his essays, he again felt nostalgic for his past life. In the essay he constructed his own world and narrating with help of potential power in the form of various ideational process. He used 30 mental processes in which he showed the mental state of the character such as John and Alice which are the children of Lamb. In the very first sentence if the essay, he begins with



mental process “Children love to listen to stories” (Lamb, 1833). He says that they love to listen to stories of their elders. Lamb with use of language goes back to Grandmother Field life that how she lived her life. The way she took care the house in which she is living. As a writer lamb felt nostalgic, he also tells them that he felt fear in that bigger house when he used to stay with his grandmother. Then he further goes back talks about the garden in there were fruits, he never plucked them but love to enjoy. This shows his mental state in which he sensed for his past life.

Then in second line, he uses relational process. He shows great love for children because he uses the words “my little ones” who “crept” nearer to him to listen to has past life. Thought it can be seen that he uses material process and existential process such as “who lived in great house” it shows his desire to back past life.

In third line he uses mental process he tells the story of the house but when tells about Robinson he comes up with material process which involves action such as “A foolish rich person pulled it down to set up a marble one of the modern invention” (Lamb, 1833). It shows the power of the rich people who can change the structure of the house any time, but lamb cannot do so because of his poverty. This why we use mental processes or relational processes by his family but for other he uses material process in which actors and goals are there.

In the fourth line lamb expressed his deep love his family and attributed them in form of relational and behavioral process as can be seen in 4th line of the essay. He sees her daughter as replica of her mother. Though in real live lamb never got marry. Here he uses mental process to express his past desires to idealized children in the form of Johan and Alice. Then he verbalizes himself the great days of grandmother life. Here he use relation processes where he attributes her as religious zeal, her care for the bigger house, and how the people give her respect. Then he narrates in material process that how the foolish richer people demolished the beauty of the old great house by changing it into new and modern house.

In fifth line he actually shows the psychology of the children to whom he tells the stores that how quickly children show their behaviors. Thought, he begins his essay with mental process and the children feel the phenomena in their mind. When in this fifth line he tells them the behavioral processes of grandmother. the children also start to express the inner experience



through behavior such as “here little Alice spread her hands” which shows that she doesn’t want to be religious like her grandmother but when lamb tells them about Fields expertise’s in dance, she involuntarily move her leg which indicates her interest in dance.

In fifth line lamb uses behavioral process to portray the behavior of the little John in form of “John expanded all her eye-brows and tried to look courageous”. Then lamb talks about his own desire using behavioral process such as “when I used to spend many hours” and comes with relational process such as “they were forbidden fruit”. In simple words he was living a life of enjoyment when his grandmother was alive and living in the great house.

In the seventh line, he pens about the material processes of their children. In the beginning children were going through mental process, then behavioral, and now material process in words such as “john [actor] slyly deposited back[material] upon the plate[goal] a bunch of grapes[circumstance]. It shows that children never look to the situation and express unconsciously what is going in their mind. So here lamb uses various sematico-grammatical construction to tell the process and convey intended message.

In eight lines, he compares his present loneliness with his past life. He narrates about his uncle in form of relational, and material processes. For lam, he was great person that this why he used relational verbs in these sentences to attribute him with praising and respect such as “he was[relational] so handsome and spirited[relational] a youth[attribute], and a king to the rest of us[attribute]. The lamb talks about his active life in which acted and performed in his days such as a brave, a man od estate in his life, and how he carries me upon his shoulder when lamb was lamfooted. Then he talks about tragic life d when his uncle became lamfooted and cut up away by the doctor. Here in this lengthy sentence, he used all type of process because he himself narrates the past experiences in verbal process. The characters are involving in all sorts of activities.

In 9th line, he begins with mental process which are a cluster of wishes back to his past life such as I[sensor] missed[mental] his kindness[phenomena], and I[sensor] missed[mental] his crossness[phenomena], and wished[mental] him to be alive again[phenomena], to be quarrelling[with him (for we quarreled sometimes)[phenomena], rather than not have[mental] him again



[phenomena]. Here he wishes again to have all the lovely time he spent with grandmother and his loving uncle. He also expresses the tragic suffering of his uncle when the doctors took up his leg.

Then in 10th line, he expresses his lost love with Alice which continued for long seven years. He tried his best to marry her, but she always rejected his offers. He tells their children about her beloved in verbal process because he never succeeds to materialize his mental and verbal desire. Then he goes from verbal to mental process in when he pens that “both the children gradually grew[mental] fainter to my view, receding, and still receding till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen[mental] in the uttermost distance[circumstance]. It shows that what he narrated here was a dream of his life, but he fails to fulfill it in material form.

In last line, he narrator himself states that these children were his dreams expressed in relational; processes but not in material processes such as “We [carrier] are [relational] nothing [attribute]; less than nothing, and dreams [attributes]. We [carrier] are [relational] only what might have been [attribute]. His life is a life of dream in which he lives in solitude. Finally, he found himself, using behavioral process, sitting chair and no one was there except lamb.

Conclusion

After the analysis of the essay “Dream Children: A Reverie” by Charles Lamb, from the perspective of ideational function of language which contributes to its thematic stances as already discussed in discussion section, showed that the author used 125 verbal processes. Out of these 125, 30 were mental processes, 29 were material processes, nine were existential processes, 32 were relational processes, 29 were behavioral processes and 12 were verbal processes. Though the title apparently shows that the mental process should be in maximum number but here the case is different. Here in this essay lamb dreams his past experiences in his society but not dreams about his future. Apart from these he narrates the life of his grandmother, uncle, Alice, and John as if it is happening in present. The way he used his language also reflect that he is living with his family because the narration is the reflection of his past life.

According to Sigmund Freud, it is necessary for every human being to fulfil his desire because you cannot avoid these desires. If you avoid them, it goes back into your unconsciousness and reflects backs in dream or in other forms. Same is the case with Lamb. His essay is his



unconscious desires reflected in his dream or writing. His reflection is in the form of stream of consciousness in this essay. He portrayed all types of verbal process such as material, mental, relational, existential, behavioral, and verbal. This various ideational functional language helped him to convey his social experiences. Here this stylistic analysis of the essay by apply transitivity showed various sematico-grammatical perspective which contributed to the thematic stances of the essay. It is also showed us that various processes of transitivity as discussed above contributes to contextual meaning of the text.

Recommendations for Further Research

Here due to time constrains, the researcher analyzed only one essay of Charles Lamb. Further research can be carried out to analyze his essays to uncover the ideational function language in stylistics analysis. Even this theory of transitivity can be applied to Francis Bacon or other essayist's essays to find out that how such type of stylistic analysis contributes to its sematic and thematic understanding.



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