The Transitivity Process Patterns and Styles in the Characterization of the Protagonist Character in Phuoc's "The Story of Tam and Cam"

Simon Arsa Manggala
simonarsa@usd.ac.id
English Letters Department, Universitas Sanata Dharma

Abstract

This paper is based on the notion in Stylistics that the study focuses on language use, the purposes, and the effects (Verdonk, 2002). The data is taken from one of the stories from Vietnam. The story is selected since the plot shares similarities in terms of the plot with the popular Cinderella stories. Therefore, readers are familiar with the plot since Cinderella stories exist in many cultures and languages (Tatar, 1999). The language use is reviewed by utilizing transitivity analysis (Matthiessen & Halliday, 2004) to examine the processes in the characterization since transitivity analysis is a significant analytical tool in accounting ideational perspective systematically (Simpson, 1993). Further, the choice of processes and patterns lead to the discussion on the purposes and effects. The examination on the transitivity analysis shows that the processes employed to characterize the protagonist character are material, mental, relational, verbal, and behavioral processes. The processes might reveal particular significant to the process of characterization. For instance, material processes frequently dominate the characterization of the main character. Thus, the character is mostly characterized by what they do and what happens with them. The other transitivity processes resemble the purpose and effect based on their meanings. Hopefully, this paper might serve an example of how to examine the language patterns in a literary work to further observe the purposes and the effects of the patterns.

Keywords: *folktale, stylistics, and Transitivity Analysis.*

Introduction: Stylistics, the Methodology, and an Approach

This paper is based on the notions in Stylistics. The basis of the thinking and working in this paper are always related to the definitions of style and, further, stylistics. Since the paper belongs to linguistic field, the definition of style should be derived from the one of linguistic definitions. Style is how language is utilized (Leech & Short, 2007: 31). The utilized language means any aspects of language, starting from the phonological aspects to the pragmatic aspects. The focus is on the 'how' rather than on 'what'. Thus, stylistics describes the process and the reasons rather than the nature of the language. In other words, stylistics explains rather than describes the language.

The product of stylistic analysis is an explanation of language use. Stylistics provides explanation of the style of a text (Bussman, 1996: 1135). Since language is systematic that language use follows particular rules and norms, linguistic style is

consequently organized accordingly to the particular rules and norms. A stylistic analysis exposes the organization of the linguistic forms constituting the style in a text (Butt & Lukin, 2009: 190). Since the observation and explanation are on the organization, the analyst might be aware of the unorganized use of language in a text. This is common in stylistic findings and results. Stylisticians might also be interested in those unorganized use of language since it presents the deviation toward the patterns. Riffaterre mentions that stylisticians observe the patterns of a text to reveal "what is ungrammatical or unconventional in a way a text" (Cuddon, 1992: 727). However, the interest should be anchored to the purposes and the effects of the language use. Thus, this paper explains particular language use in particular text.

The explanation of language use in stylistics obligatory covers the elaboration of the purposes and the effects of the use. The elaboration of the purposes and the effects answer the question 'how' language is used. Stylistics is the analysis of language form and the purpose and effects (Verdonk, 2002: 4). In other words, stylistics holds the conception that particular language use refers to particular purposes and effects. Since humans as the users of language are creative beings, they use their language creatively. Further, stylistics studies the creativity in using language (Simpson, 1993: 3). Language is employed variously to achieve their purposes and to gain particular effects. Some of the language uses are those for everyday conversation, advertising, politics, phatic communication, literature reading and writing, etc. Those language uses utilize particular linguistic style.

Literature is a specific and particular object of stylistics since it distinctively employs linguistic forms. Stylistics is a study of language to observe literature (Simpson, 1993: 2; Toolan, 2013: viii). This notion becomes main discussion in stylistics since literatures are full of styles to achieve the beauty of the works. Thus, by conducting stylistic analysis, the language in works of literature might be approached systematically. Further, the intended purposes and effects by the writers or composers might be explained linguistically and analytically. Cuddon mentions that "It is an analytical science which covers all expressive aspects of language" (1992: 872). Thus, works of literature are highly possible to be the objects of stylistics.

Works of literature are different from those of non-literature in terms of the choices of linguistic forms and, therefore, styles. Literary discourse is different from non-literary discourse in that the language in literary works is well selected by revisions and careful composition (Black, 2006: 3). However, it does not claim that non-literature works do not choose the linguistic forms well. It focuses in that a work of literature might undergo repeated process of revisions and composition before it is published and/or consumed. Thus, style is a choice (Verdonk, 2002: 7). This is in line with the previously discussed notion that language use is related to the purposes and effects. Since, in a work of literature, there might be more than one aspect of linguistic forms and style, stylisticians or stylistic analysts should choose and consider the aspects to be included in the analysis.

Stylisticians or stylistic analysts are expected to select the linguistic aspects to be examined in the analysis. The aspect of language to observe in stylistics is purposefully selected (Leech & Short, 2007: 12). The choice of aspect of language depends on what the analyst considers important (Simpson, 1993: 3). Therefore, not all the aspects of language are necessary to be discussed and explained in the analysis. In other words, the unrelated aspects of language might be put aside to avoid unspecific analysis. The consideration in choosing the linguistic aspect is, again, related to the targeted purposes and effects in the analysis. Thus, this paper would not also observe, discuss, and explain all the existing linguistic aspects in the object text. However, methodologically, the main objective is to obtain an analytical observation of a text.

Methodologically, stylistics is particular by its attention to the linguistic hard data. This attentiveness to hard data differentiates stylistics from discourse analysis. Stylistics is different from Discourse Analysis since it focuses on linguistic elements in a language use, while discourse analysis focuses on how the language use "flows and unfolds" (Sim, 2001: 231). However, the study of stylistics might consider also the context outside the texts, such as the text type, the topic, the settings, etc. (Verdonk, 2002, p. 19). Coming to the interpretation of the hard data, they provide a way to trace back the analysis and to always recheck the analysis back to the data. In other words, stylistic analysis is replicable by checking back the hard data.

Besides being replicable, stylistic analysis is also rigorous and retrievable. Simpson mentions those three characteristics of stylistic methodology (Simpson, 2004: 4). First, stylistics is replicable by the possibility for other analysts to validate the analysis and the results by the similar texts. The data, procedures, and steps are accessible to be repeated. Second, the analysis is rigorous since the methodology is clear. The working framework in the analysis is based on the systemic and structured use of language. The analysis is in line with how the language elements are supposed to be examined. Third, stylistics is retrievable. The terms and criteria in the analysis are agreed upon by other stylisticians and analysts. Therefore, the method of a stylistic analysis might be retrievable. Those characteristics encourage the utilization of a particular grammar theory as a toolkit in stylistic analysis.

A promising stylistic toolkit is the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) proposed by Matthiessen and Halliday (2004). SFG aspects have become the channel to conduct stylistics analysis. Many stylistic analyses have been conducted by employing SFG. Stylisticians have employed transitivity in analyzing narrative texts (Simpson, 2004: 75). Cunanan highlights the influence of language in a prose (2011: 69-79). He perceives Systemic Functional Linguistics as the working framework to study the language beyond the formal structures since it considers the contexts. Particularly, the paper also highlights the use of transitivity to represent conceptual view of world. He counts the percentage of the transitivity process occurrences and the participants of the processes. The result shows that the thought and the picture about and of the Mrs. Grey are visible through the use of the processes and participants. The most frequent process is existential and the most frequent participants take the roles as actors and goals. Though methodologically the paper employs transitivity, the paper does not include the discussion on the relation between the linguistic choices and the effects to the literary work and/or the purposes of the author to employ particular linguistic choices.

Transitivity patterns might also contribute in identifying the genre of a text. For instance, the analysis utilizing transitivity by Santosa, Priyanto, and Nuraeni (2014: 23-36) study the employment of transitivity to the construction of particular types of genre in Indonesian media by the antagonists. However, the paper mainly focuses on the analysis by the appraisal system in the language. The transitivity analysis is only a support to the findings. The researchers collect the data from news in the forms of the polarity of linguistic elements showing attitudes. Later on, they scrutinize them into positive attitudes and negative attitudes. From the analysis, they conclude the attitudes of the antagonists in the media. As the results, journalists express their antagonism though the transitivity, nominal groups, and lexis systems. Though the paper utilizes transitivity analysis, it only selects the clauses supporting the antagonism. In other words, the clauses that do not support the antagonism are not the object of the analysis. This results in the missing explanation on the frequency of the prominent processes. Despite the lack of the discussion on the frequency, the paper might be successful in presenting the effects and the purposes of particular linguistic use in

media, which is to present particular ideology.

Transitivity analysis on literature has been conducted also in another genre of literature, poetry. It might reveal the hidden meanings in a poem. Wulansari and Waluyo wrote a paper about how transitivity analysis is employed to examine three poems of Romantic era (2016: 171-176). They identify each line of the poems to analyze the predicators and the processes in the poems. Later on, they compare the frequency of the processes in on poem to the others. The last step is interpreting the result. The result shows that in two of the poems the most dominant process is material process while in one poem behavioral process is the most dominant process. The researchers interpret the result by the nature of the processes. Poems with dominant material process reveal the meaning that the actors in the poems do some actions. A poem with dominant behavior process reveals the psychological and physiological behavior of the nature and the writer of the poem. The transitivity analysis of the poems counts the occurrences of transitivity processes and the meanings.

Although the previously reviewed papers employ transitivity as the working tools, this paper would be different from the previously reviewed researches. It shares a difference with the one by Cunanan (2011: 69-79) in the discussion and interpretation. This paper includes also the discussion and interpretation in relation to the writer's purposes and the effects of particular linguistic choices. By discussing the purposes and the effects of the choices, this paper belongs to stylistic analysis. On the contrary, the purposes and effects are present in the paper by Santosa, Riyadi, and Priyanto (2014: 23-36). However, this paper is different from it since this paper focuses on the patterns of transitivity analysis only and not to the appraisal system. Moreover, this paper might present more detailed number of frequency in the data presentation. Lastly, the paper by Wulansari and Waluyo (2016: 171-176) shows the

analysis of poems, while this paper presents the observation on a prose.

In addition to the methodology, this paper employs SFG by its transitivity system analysis. More specifically, the analysis would classify clauses based on the predicators and the processes and observe each clause in the story. The observation would come to the ideational meanings of the choices. The meanings are derived from the choice of processes since the choice of language brings consequences in meaning (Butt & Lukin, 2009: 192). English has four main processes namely doing, thinking, saying, and characterizing (Toolan, 2013: 76). Transitivity analysis by Matthiessen & Halliday (2004) might provide more detailed analysis to Toolan's categories of processes. There are six types of processes, namely, material, mental, relational, verbal, existential, and behavioral processes. The clauses are selected based on their participants. Specifically, the clauses are those in which the participants are the character of the story. Thus, particular process having the character as the participants might resemble the participant description (Eggins, 2004: 206). The result of the analysis is the patterns of the processes employed in the story. In the analysis, an interpretation has been done to the characteristics of the character. However, the characteristics are not the main goal of this paper. In addition, the result of analysis is not a closed interpretation no matter how rigorous is the analysis (Carter & Simpson, 2005: 5; Simpson, Language, Ideology, and Point of View, 1993: 107). Thus, different interpretation resulting in different characteristic is highly open and possible. The main objective of this paper is that linguistic hard data support the interpretation.

The object of this paper is a literary work in a form of a folktale. The folktale is entitled "The Story of Tam and Cam" (Phuoc, 2015). The story is selected due to its familiar plot. Even though the story is retold from a particular culture, Vietnamese culture, the plot is similar to the universal

Cinderella story. Thus, there is an underlying assumption that the characterization analysis would be familiar to the readers. Moreover, Cinderella story plot has been widely known in the world and reproduced in several cultures (Haase, 2008: 201; Bottigheimer, 2009: 67; Zipes, 2000: 97; Zipes, 2006: 107-109; Tatar, 1999: 102).

Considering all the previous discussion, this paper has two main objectives. First, it would identify the patterns of transitivity system utilization in a folktale, specifically in the characterization of the protagonist character. Thus, the findings would be organized based on the characteristics of the character followed by the transitivity system supports. Second, it would serve an evidence that linguistic hard data might support literary analysis. This paper is limited to a particular genre of literature and to a particular work. Therefore, it does not claim any generalization that similar genres or works (in terms of the plot) would utilize similar stylistic strategies.

The Findings and Discussion: The Characteristics and the Linguistic Supports

In this part of the paper, the findings are presented and the discussions follows. Since the main objective is to identify the transitivity patterns in the characterization, the presentation of the findings would mention the character and the characteristics and they are followed by the linguistic evidences and supports to their characteristics. In other words, the characteristics are determined first by considering the context. Some of the data are presented in numbers. Later on, the numbers are elaborated by their interpretation.

The protagonist character in the story is named *Tam.* This character resembles the *Cinderella* in the Cinderella story. The character undergoes similar experiences to Cinderella. For instance, she has a widower father. Her father married again and *Tam* got a step sister. Her step sister, namely *Cam,* was envy to *Tam*'s beauty. However, *Tam*

was more diligent than *Cam.* Nearly to the end of the story, *Tam* was helped by a supernatural being and was able to marry the king.

Tam is prominently characterized as being diligent, obedient, and kindhearted. The linguistic analysis conducted in this paper supports the depiction of the characteristics. Those three characteristics are supported by 36 clauses. The most prominent transitivity process is material process, by 26 processes. The other processes are mental processes by three clauses, relational processes by four clauses, behavioral processes by three clauses, and one verbal process by one clause. Diligence is represented by 13 clauses and all of them employ material process. Obedience is depicted by nine clauses, eight clauses employ material process and a clause employs verbal process. The characteristic of being kind-hearted is represented by 15 clauses, including five material process, three mental process, four relational process, and three behavioral process.

From the general occurrences and frequency, the material processes prominently serve particular meanings. Since the material processes represent the participants' actions, the participants of the clauses should be identified in order to consider whether the participants are the characters of the story as well or not. Further, the identification is unto what participants the processes take. However, for sure, the characteristics are supported mostly by actions and happenings. Similar analysis is applied to the other processes to observe and to identify the participants of each processes. The following discussions elaborate the analysis for each characteristic.

1. *Tam*'s being Diligent

Tam is characterized as being diligent. *Tam* always takes care of her tasks and duties. She always shows her efforts to accomplish the tasks. In addition, in a way, she could be characterized as a persistent character. However, her being diligent is

more prominent than her being persistent since in the story she received some helps from another character, the supernatural beings. In depicting *Tam*'s diligence, the story employed several configurations of Process-participants. The most frequent configuration is Process-Actor-Circumstance by five clauses. Three configurations, namely Process-Actor, Process-Goal, and Process-Actor-Goal, only occur in one clause each. The configuration of Process-Goal-Circumstance appear in two clauses.

The most frequent occurrences of process-participation configuration is the configuration of Process-Actor-Circumstance. This might be interpreted that the characteristic of being diligent could be depicted by the actions conducted by *Tam* herself without the presence of other participants. In other words, it can be considered that the characteristic is *Tam*'s nature. Moreover, the circumstances are dominated by manner and purposes. Those circumstances resemble the way *Tam* conduct the actions and the motivations. *Tam* is motivated to be diligent.

In addition, in real life, diligence is by nature difficult to explain by other processes. The writer of the story selected the material processes seemly due to this reason. Possibly, the choice of the processes could be also because of the fact that the story is for children and *Tam* is the protagonist character. Children might be taught to mimic/imitate the protagonist's characteristic of being diligent by highlighting the actions conducted by the character. Thus, the style and the patterns of material processes to describe diligence might be suitable and appropriate.

2. *Tam*'s being Obedient

The second prominent *Tam*'s characteristic is being obedient. Obedient might be represented by the actions of being submissive and loyal to other characters. In the story, *Tam* as the protagonist is depicted as being obedient since she is most likely loyal and submissive to the stepmother. Particular transitivity configurations in

depicting this characteristic is dominated by Process-goal-circumstance by four clauses. The other configuration (Process-goal, Process-actor-goal-circumstance, Process-actor-circumstance, Process-actor-circumstance, and Process-actor-goal-attribute) only appear once by a clause each.

The most frequent configuration depicting *Tam*'s being obedient is by Process-Goal-Circumstances. The frequency is pretty high that half of the occurrences are written by employing this configuration. The configuration might be interpreted that the Goals receiving the impact of the actions are more prominent. Interestingly, the goals are dominantly occupied by the protagonist *Tam*. This means that in depicting the obedience, *Tam* is impacted by the processes. In addition, most of the actors are the stepmother. However, there is one occurrences showing *Tam* as the actor and the step mother as the goal. This phenomenon should regard the choice of verb in the process. The verb *begged* represents obedience and submissiveness.

Obedience is only represented by two kinds of processes, namely material and verbal processes. The verbal process occurs only once. However, this occurrence is meaningful in that conventionally obedience is represented by actions. The configuration of the verbal process indicates that the verbiage or the utterance and the target are not present. It could be interpreted that the content and the target are not significant. In addition, in the clause the circumstance of frequency *never* highlights the rareness of the process.

From the perspective that literature is meant to teach particular ideology, the representation of obedience is motivated. As the target readers of the story, children are expected to adopt the characteristic. They are expected to be obedient. The choice of transitivity processes indicates that the writer exemplifies the characteristic by actions and verbal processes. Further, the children are supposed to conduct actions assigned to them as the goals of the process

and never say something about the assignment.

3. *Tam*'s being Kindhearted

The third prominent *Tam*'s characteristic is being kindhearted. *Tam* is depicted as kind girl. Her actions are often driven by her emotions. The emotions appear to be directed to her supernatural friend, the fish. Interestingly, the writer represents this characteristic by employing some transitivity processes and the occurrences are almost equal in numbers. This characteristic is supported by material, mental, relational, and behavioral processes.

The material processes representing *Tam*'s kind heart place the protagonist as the Actors. The Goals are *Tam*'s supernatural friend. The circumstances are time, place, and manner circumstances. The time and place circumstances might represent the time and place where *Tam* conduct the actions. The word *each day* highlights the frequency that *Tam*'s kindness might be done frequently. The place circumstances indicate that *Tam* conduct kind actions in her surroundings. The choice of words for the manner circumstances might represent *Tam*'s emotion when she conducted her actions.

The mental processes represent *Tam*'s mental image. The configurations of this process do not mention the Senser of the process. However, from the context, the sensers could be predicted as *Tam*. The phenomena come from *Tam*'s mental image; a happier life and *Tam*'s friend. The circumstance depicts *Tam*'s mental condition. In addition to the previous hard data evidences and supports, the relational processes attach particular emotional attributes to *Tam*. *Tam* is attributed by words such as *happy, overjoyed,* and devastated. Further, the behavioral processes depict the actions related to *Tam*'s uncontrollable actions resulting from her mental conditions.

Kindness as a characteristic seems to be more complex than the other characteristics possessed by the protagonist *Tam*. However, this might be inferred that this complexity represents the complexity in real life that being kind requires more complex actions. As assumed that this story is meant to teach the target readers, the complexity might demonstrate the particular agenda by the writer that children should involve their emotions in order to be considered as kind persons.

Conclusion and Final Remarks

As the conclusion, stylistic analysis could be applied to literary works especially to children literatures since the language is well chosen. The analysis should depart from the notion and assumption that the language is motivated by particular purposes and for particular effects. Literatures for children are likely meant to teach children as the target readers. This might be the prominent underlying purpose of the language choices. More specifically, the purpose is to at least introduce particular ideology to children. The ideology might be as specific as in a form of the characteristics or as general as the moral values of the story. The choice of language brings particular effects to the delivery that some elements of the story are more foregrounded than the others.

In this paper, the linguistic choices in a folktale to characterize the protagonist characters might depart from a particular purpose and might cause particular effects. The purpose is to highlight the character as a role model for the readers. Children as the targeted readers are expected to imitate or adapt the protagonist. The effects of the linguistic choices result in the different strategy in presenting the characteristics by the transitivity systems.

As another conclusion, the analysis presented in this paper demonstrate how the rigorous linguistic observation might provide hard data for literary analysis and discussion. The stylistic analysis brings about in depth examination of the linguistic choices in supporting a discussion on one intrinsic element of a prose, the

characterization. From the findings, the characteristics of the protagonist character are supported by particular linguistic choices. Diligence is supported fully by material processes, obedience is by material and verbal processes, and kindness is by material, mental, relational, and behavioral processes.

As the final remark, stylistic analysis in literary works and intuition are inseparable. Mentioning the characteristics of particular characters in a literature is a work of intuition by elaborating the readers' prior cultural and linguistic knowledge. The stylistic analysis is a support by providing the hard data as the evidence. Therefore, different analysts with different intuitions might come to different finding even though they observe the same object.
Though the methodology in this paper might be retrievable, rigorous, and replicable, this paper is very limited in the scope of the data and of the linguistic tools. Future analysis might be conducted by expanding the coverage of the data and by employing more complex linguistic tools since SFG provides other aspects of language to examine.

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