

Transitivity Analysis of Emily Dickinson's Poem

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Transitivity Analysis of Emily Dickinson's Poem Entitled "I Cannot Live with You"

Maftuch Fahman Al Amiqi¹ and Sunardi²

¹Universitas Dian Nuswantoro, Semarang, Indonesia
¹mfamiqi@gmail.com

²Universitas Dian Nuswantoro, Semarang, Indonesia
²sunardi@dsn.dinus.ac.id

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Abstract. This research aims to identify the types of processes, related participants, circumstances, and the field of discourse in Emily Dickinson's poem entitled "I Cannot Live with You". The method used is a descriptive qualitative method with the Halliday theory approach on Transitivity Processes. The analysis discovered 7 types of transitivity processes and 57 participants, with the dominant types of processes are Material and Relational:Attributive with 12 processes (33.33%). Correspondingly, the most frequent participants were related to the Relational:Attributive Process, particularly the Carrier and Attribute which appeared 12 times (21.05%). Additionally, 4 types of circumstances were identified, totaling 16 instances, with the Circumstance of Accompaniment being the most common with 6 occurrences (40%). The field of discourse in Emily Dickinson's poem entitled "I Cannot Live with You" is to tell that love cannot last forever.

Keywords: Emily Dickinson, field of discourse, poem, SFL, transitivity

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis proses, partisipan terkait, keadaan, dan medan wacana dalam puisi Emily Dickinson yang berjudul "I Cannot Live with You". Metode yang digunakan adalah metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan teori Halliday mengenai proses transitivitas. Hasil analisis menemukan 7 jenis proses transitivitas dan 57 partisipan, dengan jenis proses yang paling dominan adalah Material dan Relasional:Sandangan dengan total 12 proses (33,33%). Sejalan dengan itu, partisipan yang paling sering muncul berkaitan dengan Proses Relasional:Sandangan, khususnya Penyandang dan Sandangan yang muncul sebanyak 12 kali (21,05%). Selain itu, 4 jenis sirkumstansi teridentifikasi, berjumlah 16 kemunculan, dengan Sirkumstansi Penyerta menjadi yang paling umum dengan 6 kemunculan (40%). Medan wacana dalam puisi Emily Dickinson yang berjudul "I Cannot Live with You" adalah menceritakan bahwa cinta tidak bisa bertahan selamanya.

Kata kunci: Emily Dickinson, medan wacana, puisi, SFL, transitivitas

INTRODUCTION

Poems, usually written in lines and stanzas, are a type of writing that can be used to express concepts. Additionally, to create a beautiful poetry structure, poets will occasionally try to monopolize the words and conceal the original meaning. According to Bugeja (1994, p. 6), a poem incorporates concepts that unite cognition and emotion, influences how people view the world, and entralls readers with visions of natural beauty or pivotal moments. In order to depict the real world through

the use of words, poets work similarly to composers. A poem is any kind of verbal or written language that is structured rhythmically and is meant to tell a story or express any kind of emotion, idea, or state of being (Ollila & Jantas, 2006). Poetry's focus on the subtle interplay of language, meaning, and emotion makes it a rich medium for exploring transitivity.

The way actions are structured in a poem can reveal deep insights into the relationships between subjects, objects, and the broader themes the poet is addressing. Poetry, with its delicate dance of words, emotions, and meanings, offers a unique space to explore how we interact with the world and each other. In a poem, every action, every verb, every connection between words is like a heartbeat that reveals something profound about the relationships it describes. The way a poet chooses to structure these actions is not just about grammar; it is about life itself. It's about who we are, how we affect others, and how they, in turn, shape us. This research looks at Emily Dickinson, who was one of the most important American poets and whose poetry is widely read among people of all ages and interests. During her lifetime, Emily Dickinson published 10 poems out of her extensive collection of nearly 1,800 (Habegger, Emily Dickinson American poet, 2024). She expressed great dissatisfaction and contended that the stylistic alterations made during the editing process had completely altered the original meaning of her early poems when they were being prepared for publication. She fearlessly disregarded conventional norms in both versification and grammar, displaying remarkable audacity and originality in the intellectual themes explored within her writings. After Emily's death, her sister, Lavinia, discovered a manuscript containing more than 1,800 poems. Since then, her poetry was published in 1890 and continues to be printed until now. The researchers chose a poem from Emily Dickinson entitled "I Cannot Live with You (1890)" because this poem is one of Emily Dickinson's longest poem, and possibly one of her most anguished, is presented in this poem. Even though this poem is one of her most tormented written poems sadly, this one was not discovered until after her death.

Emily Dickinson's "I Cannot Live with You" is a profound exploration of unrequited love, separation, and existential conflict. The poem is structured as a dramatic monologue where the speaker articulates why they cannot live with their beloved, despite their intense feelings (LitCharts LLC, 2022). This exploration can be deepened by analyzing the transitivity patterns within the poem. Analyzing "I Cannot Live with You" through the lens of transitivity involves examining the grammatical structures Dickinson uses to convey action, emotion, and relational dynamics. Key aspects to consider include the participants, the processes, and the circumstances in the poem.

An example is shown below:

"I cannot live with you

It would be life"

(Emily Dickinson, I Cannot Live with You, 1st and 2nd line)

Taking a look deeply on the poem above, it can be seen that Emily Dickinson tried to reflect what is inside her mind, and then she put it into words. Because of this, it can be said that a poem is made to show how the world impacts the writer's feelings. On the other hand, the researchers viewed the example above can also be viewed at from a language point of view, such as by using systemic functional linguistics (SFL). SFL sees language as a tool for making sense. Gerot and Wignell (1994, p. 5) say that this method tries to describe how language is used in real life by focusing on text and

context. Also, it has to do with how the meaning of words is understood, so the researchers would do a study from this point of view to find out more.

Transitivity is a grammatical trait that shows if a verb takes a direct object or not. If it does, it is called transitive, and if it does not, it is called intransitive. The ditransitive verb is an extension of this idea. It can have both a direct and an indirect receiver. Halliday (2014, p. 213) says that the Transitivity Process is made up of three parts. They are the Process, the people who take part in the process, and the things that happen during the process. The system of transitivity is made up of different kinds of processes and the mechanisms that make them happen. Material process, mental process, relational process, behavioral process, verbal process, and existential process are the six types of processes. According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2014, p. 227), transitivity is a clause system with a structural framework that serves as a tool for interpreting experiences by examining the configurations of processes, participants, and circumstances. This concept is highly valuable for analyzing clauses. Halliday's transitivity framework offers a comprehensive approach to understanding the meaning within clauses and is commonly used in such analyses. The transitivity system plays a crucial role in building context, allowing for a deeper exploration of textual content and supporting the development of hypotheses about different objects or subjects.

The researchers found some related studies that support and provide context to be the comparison of this study namely Wahyuni (2019), Haroon and Arslan (2021), Sartika (2021), Sultan (2023), Dewi (2023), and Aliffudin and Cahyono (2023). The first study is from Wahyuni (2019), who analyzes the transitivity system in memoirs. The second study is done by Haroon and Arslan (2021), who analyze the transitivity process in a poem entitled "The Old Building" by Imdad Hussein. The third study is done by Sartika (2021), who analyzes the transitivity process and field of discourse William Blake's Poems entitled "The Little Black Boy", "The Echoing Green", "The Garden of Love", and "A Poison Tree". The fourth study is done by Sultan (2023), who analyzes the transitivity process in a poem entitled "Home They Brought Her Warrior Dead". The fifth study is done by Aliffudin and Cahyono (2023), on the use of transitivity in Emma Watson's speech. The following study is the last one that could support and provide the context to be the comparison of this study which is done by Dewi (2023), who analyzes the transitivity process in sixth grade elementary's LKS. This study examines the ideational meaning within an editorial text using transitivity theory, drawing data from Emily Dickinson's poem entitled "I Cannot Live with You". The research focuses on an editorial related to the poem, which includes three key semantic categories. There are participants, processes, and circumstances that help explain how real-world people, events, and situations are represented through language. The researchers are interested in transitivity analysis because the language structure of poem is distinct from general texts, with differences in the processes, participants, and circumstances they involve. By applying transitivity theory, the researchers aim to delve deeper into the meanings of the poem, helping to reduce potential misinterpretations between the writer and readers. The purpose of this study is to outline the transitivity process, related participants, related circumstances and field of the discourse as they are manifest in Emily Dickinson's poetry. By examining the transitivity processes, related participants, circumstances, and field of discourse in Emily Dickinson's poetry, this study aims to deepen our understanding of her poetic techniques and thematic explorations.

This research used Halliday's theory with the seven distinct sorts of processes. According to Halliday (1994, p. 106), there are seven distinct sorts of processes. To begin, the process of doing or acting materially is referred to as a material process. When a clause describes a material process, it must include both an act (the process) and a principal (the participant). Second, mental processes are what we are, including how we feel, what we think, and what we perceive. There are three categories:

affective or reactive (feeling), cognitive (thinking), and perceptive (perceiving through the five senses). Feeling is the most basic category. Third, there is a physiological and psychological component to behavioral processes. Some examples of these components are breathing, dreaming, snoring, smiling, hiccupping, looking, observing, listening, and considering. Fourth, the process of stating something, or more accurately, symbolically indicating, is what verbal processes are. The fifth point is that relational processes involve a state of being (which includes having). Existential processes are processes of existence, which brings us to our sixth point. Seventh, the meteorological processes are how one can tell about the weather.

METHOD

This researcher used descriptive qualitative method with the Halliday theory approach, the Transitivity Process. This method was used to describe the subject of the research based on the facts. This research applied the descriptive qualitative method to analyze the data. According to Creswell (2013, p. 254), descriptive qualitative method has the purpose of gathering information about a certain condition, analyzing the data, describing how the condition or phenomenon occurs, and finalize the findings based on the result of observation. The researchers attempted this method to analyze the transitivity system in Emily Dickinson's poems. The poem was first published in 1890 in a collection titled *Poems by Emily Dickinson*, edited by Mabel Loomis Todd and Thomas Wentworth Higginson.

The method of data collection in this research are searching, selecting, and documenting. The researchers searched some poems by Emily Dickinson on the website <https://allpoetry.com/>. Then the researchers selected a poem by Emily Dickinson entitled "I Cannot Live with You (1890)" which is able to be analyzed from the website <https://allpoetry.com/I-cannot-live-with-You>. Finally, the researchers collected the data by copying the poem of Emily Dickinson entitled "I Cannot Live with You (1890)" into a text file.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researchers present the results of data analysis conducted on the poem "I Cannot Live with You." This analysis aims to explore how transitivity is linguistically expressed in the poem to address the research question.

Types of Processes and Related Participants

The summaries of the process types and related participants from Emily Dickinson's poem entitled "I Cannot Live with You" are presented in Table 1. According to Table 1, there are 36 transitivity processes and 57 participants in Emily Dickinson's poem entitled "I Cannot Live with You". The most common types of transitivity process identified are the Material Process and Relational:Attributive Process both with the total of 12 processes (33.33%) found in the poem. The other transitivity process types found from the analysis are Behavioural Process with 5 occurrences (13.89%), Relational Process:Identifying with 2 occurrences (8.33%), Mental:Cognitive Process with 2 occurrences (5.56%), Mental:Perceptive Process with 2 occurrences (5.56%), Mental:Affective Process with 1 occurrences (2.78%).

According to the transitivity analysis, the most frequently occurring process in the clauses of Emily Dickinson's poem "I Cannot Live with You" are the Material Process and Relational:Attributive

Process. The reason Relational Process:Attributive is used more dominantly is that she wants to involve states of being. She expresses her feelings by involving herself and her feelings in poetry by relating participants to its identity or description. In addition, she wants to tell about how things happened by imagining the scene or comparing something to something else but still related. Furthermore, the reason Material Process is dominantly used is that the writer aims to describe the cases happen in the poem. In addition, the writer elaborates on the main subject, detailing the actions taken by the participants during the cases.

Table 1 Types of Process and Related Participants

Types of Process and Related Participants	Finding	Process Percentage	Related Participants Percentage
Material	12	33.33%	
Actor	10		17.54%
Goal	7		12.28%
Behavioural	5	13.89%	
Behaver	5		8.77%
Mental:Affective	1	2.78%	
Mental:Cognitive	2	5.56%	
Mental:Perceptive	2	5.56%	
Senser	4		7.02%
Phenomenon	3		5.26%
Relational:Attributive	12	33.33%	
Carrier	12		19.30%
Attribute	12		19.30%
Relational:Identifying	2	5.56%	
Token	2		3.51%
Value	2		3.51%
Total Process	36	100%	
Total Participants	57		100%

Additionally, 47 participants are found based on the result. The dominant participants in Emily Dickinson poem entitled "I Cannot Live with You" are Carrier and Attribute (12) both with percentage 21.05%, followed by Actor (10) with percentage 17.54%, Goal (7) with percentage 12.28%, Behaver (5) with percentage 8.77%, Senser (4) with percentage 7.02%, Phenomenon (3) with percentage 5.26%, Token (2) with percentage 3.51%, Value (2) with percentage 3.51%. Even though, Material Process and Relational:Attributive Process are the most frequent process that can be found in the poem, Carrier and Attribute becomes the most dominant participants

Type of Circumstances

In addition to the processes and related participants, circumstances are also identified in the text. The summary of these circumstances is presented in Table 2. According to Table 2, there are 16 circumstances found in Emily Dickinson's poem entitled "I Cannot Live with You". The most frequent circumstance is the circumstance of accompaniment with the percentage of 40% which appears 6 times, followed by the circumstance of place with percentage of 20% which appears 3 times, circumstance of manner with percentage of 20% which appears 3 times, circumstance of cause with the percentage of 20% which appears 3 times.

Table 2 Circumstances in "I Cannot Live with You"

Types of Circumstances	Finding	Percentage
Place	3	20%
Manner	3	20%
Cause	3	20%
Accompaniment	6	40%
Total	15	100%

With circumstances of accompaniment being the most dominant type in the poem, the writer uses these circumstances to tell with or without who or what and is probed by who or what else. by the circumstance of accompaniment appear the most, it is related to the title of the poem "I Cannot Live with You". From that title, it shows that circumstance of accompaniment appear one time and will keep appearing because she mentions and repeats that title to tell how desperate she is when she cannot live with him.

Material Process

Based on the results, the material process appears 11 times in the data. The researchers provided an example of the material process in this section:

Excerpt 1 (verse 2, line 5)

The Sexton keeps the key to putting up our life

The Sexton	Keeps	the key	to putting up our life
Actor	Process:Material	Goal	Circ:Cause

The words "The Sexton keeps the key to" mean that the churchyard keeper locks up (LitCharts LLC, 2022). The material process in this clause is expressed through the word "keeps". The word "keeps" refers to refrain from granting, giving, or allowing (Merriam-Webster, 2024). The word "keeps" indicates an action being described or performed by the subject. In this instance, the subject is trying to keep "the key" which is the goal to refrain them from granting what they want. The Actor in this clause is "The Sexton" who doesn't want them to get what they want by keeping the key. The words "to putting up our life" are the circumstance of purpose because the reason why The Sexton keeps the key is to put up the speaker and her beloved life.

Mental Process

According to the result, the mental process occurs 5 times in the data. The researchers provided examples of mental process to be discussed in this section:

Excerpt 2 (verse 3, line 11)

A newer Sevres pleases

A newer Sevres	pleases
Phenomenon	Mental:Affect

The words “a newer Sevres pleases” mean she would prefer some fancy new French china (LitCharts LLC, 2022). The mental process in this clause is expressed through the word “pleases”. The word “pleases” refers to afford or give pleasure or satisfaction (Merriam-Webster, 2024). The term “pleases” means to provide or offer a sense of pleasure, satisfaction, enjoyment, or contentment. In this instance, “A newer Sevres” is the phenomenon because it is the one to be sensed by seeing it. The phenomenon “A newer Sevres” provides a sense of pleasure because by the context, the word “A newer Sevres” means a new fancy Sevres. Therefore, The Process Mental:Affect “pleases” affects the hidden Senser which based on the previous clause is the housewife because it’s fanciness giving pleasure, satisfaction, and enjoyment

Behavioural Process

According to the findings, the Behavioural Process occurs 5 times in the data. The researchers provided the example of Behavioural Process to be discussed in this section:

Excerpt 3 (verse 1, line 1)

I cannot live with you

I	cannot live	with you
Behaver	Behavioural	Circ:Accompaniment

The words “I Cannot Live with You” mean I cannot live with you because living with you would mean being fully alive (LitCharts LLC, 2022). The Behavioural Process in this clause is expressed through the words “cannot live”. The word “live” refers to be alive, to persist in living, and to sustain one’s existence (Merriam-Webster, 2024). In this instance, the Behaver “I” is not being able to live with the other. The Circumstance of Accompaniment “with you” tells with who that the Behaver “I” cannot live. By the context, the clause “I Cannot Live with You” means that she can’t live with him because living with him would mean being fully alive or to continue living

Relational Process:Attributive

According to the finding, the Relational Process:Attributive occurs 12 times in the data. The researchers provided the example of Relational Process:Attributive to be discussed in this section:

Excerpt 4 (verse 1, line 3 & 4)

And life is over there behind the shelf

And	life	is	over there behind the shelf
	Carrier	Attributive:Circumstantial	Attribute

The words “and life is over there behind the shelf” mean the life is something that exists elsewhere. It’s over there behind the shelf (LitCharts LLC, 2022). The Relational Process in this clause is expressed through the word “is”. The word “is” refers to the present tense third-person singular of be (Merriam-Webster, 2024). There are two participants in this clause which are “life” as the carrier and

“over there behind the shelf” as the Attribute. The Relational Process:Attributive¹⁷ “is” explains where is the carrier “life” located. Therefore, the Relational Process:Attributive “is” is categorized as Relational Process Attributive:Circumstantial which makes the Attribute “over there behind the shelf” that is a circumstance of place becomes the Attribute. By the context, the writer express her feeling that life is something that exists elsewhere. It is over there behind the shelf.

Relational Process:Identifying

According to the result, the Relational Process:Identifying occurs 3 times in the data. The researchers provided the example of Relational Process:Identifying to be discussed in this section:

Excerpt 5 (verse 1, line 2)

It would be life

It	would be	Life
Token	Identifying:Intensive	Value

The words “it would be life” mean living with you would mean being fully alive (LitCharts LLC, 2022). The Relational Process in this clause is expressed through the word “would be”. The word “be” refers to be equivalent in meaning: to share the same connotation, to have identical meaning: to represent the same idea or object, to belong to the same category (Merriam-Webster, 2024). There are two participants; “It” as the Token and “life” as the Value in this clause. The Relational Process Identifying:Intensive “would be” involves the state of being. The Relational Process “would be” tells the Value of the Token “It”. The term “life” has the quality that distinguishes a vital and functional being from a dead body. According to the context, the writer cannot live with him because living with him would mean being fully alive.

Field of Discourse

This section explains the contextual description in Emily Dickinson's poem entitled “I Cannot Live with You” in the form of a field²⁴ of discourse. There is an experiential meaning column in this field of discourse part that includes types of processes³ participants, and circumstances, while the field of discourse column includes experiential domains, short-term goals, and long-term goals. This is stated in Table 3.

The dominant process that occurs in Emily Dickinson's poem entitled “I Cannot Live with You” is Material Process and Relational:Attributive Process, because the verb utilized in the text are mostly processes of doing and being. Material process often refers to topics dealing with concrete, physical actions. In the text, it indicates that the writer and others are engaged in a process involving action. In Emily Dickinson's poem, “I Cannot Live with You” the focus on Material Processes is because the writer wants to illustrate the live of the characters in the poem are discarded. The character “I” wants to stand by and close her beloved eyes to make them meet at a distance. Besides that, Relational:Attributive Process often refers to topics that involve states of being (including having). In the text, it shows that the writer and others are engaged in a process involving states of being (including having). In Emily Dickinson's poem entitled “I Cannot Live with You” the focus on Relational:Attributive Process is because the writer wants to define the allusion of being in Heaven and Hell. Meanwhile, the dominant participants in Emily Dickinson's poem entitled “I Cannot Live with You” are Carrier and Attribute. The Carrier is life, old ones, that new grace, you, he, and I which

refers to the participants of the poem, followed by Attributes that are over there behind the shelf, crack, freeze, plain and foreign, closer by, eyes, lost, there, here which refers to the location, condition, and appearance of the participants. Therefore, the writer of the text uses the dominance of Material Process and Relational:Attributive Process and the role of Carrier and Attribute to show a focus on concrete doing and happening and states of being.

Table 3 Field of Discourse of the Poem "I Cannot Live with You"

Lexicogrammatical Analysis Experiential Meaning	Contextual Description Field of Discourse
<p>Type of Process Material – <i>keeps, discarded, to shut down, stand by, put out, served, sought to, rang, meet</i> Relational Attributive – <i>be, glow, shone, had</i> Participants Actor – <i>The Sexton, housewife, I, your face, you, my name, we</i> Goal – <i>the key, his porcelain like a cup, the other's gaze, Jesus', heaven</i> Carrier – <i>life, old ones, that new grace, you, he, I</i> Attribute – <i>over there behind the shelf, crack, freeze, plain and foreign, closer by, eyes, lost, there, here</i></p> <p>Circumstances Accompaniment – <i>with you, with me, ¹thout my right of frost death's privilege, with just the door ajar that oceans are</i></p>	<p>Experiential domain The character "I" is telling the reader that the couple mentioned in the poem was apart because their live are discarded. Therefore, to shut the other gaze down, they need to stand by and close each other eyes to make them meet apart, the character "I" is here in Hell and the character "you" is there in Heaven.</p> <p>Short-term goal To describe that the poem's speaker tells a beloved that they "cannot live" together, not because their love is insufficient, but because it is overpowering.</p> <p>Long-term goal The writer implies to the reader that love is a thing that can not last forever.</p>



The experiential domain in Emily Dickinson's poem entitled "I Cannot Live with You" is explain about the character "I" is telling the reader that the couple mentioned in the poem was apart because their live are discarded. Therefore, to shut the other gaze down, they need to stand by and close each other eyes ⁵ make them meet apart, the character "I" is here in Hell and the character "you" is there in Heaven. The short-term goal of the poem is to describe that the poem's speaker tells a beloved that they "cannot ³e" together, not because their love is insufficient, but because it is overpowering. Additionally, the long-term goal of the poem is the writer implies to the reader that love is a thing that can not last forever.

CONCLUSION

Material Processes and Relational:Attributive Processes are predominantly used to describe the actions taken by the characters in the poem and involve states of being (including having). The focus on Material Processes is because the writer wants to illustrate the live of the characters in the poem are discarded. The character "I" wants to stand by and close her beloved eyes to make them meet at a distance. Besides that, the focus on Relational:Attributive Process is because the writer wants to define the allusion of being in Heaven and ⁴Hell. The participants Actor, Carrier and Attribute are the most frequent participant found in Emily Dickinson's poem entitled "I Cannot Live with You". Since

Relational:Attributive and Material Processes are the most frequent processes that can be found in the poem, then the participant from the Relational:Attributive and Material Processes must be the dominant in the album, in this case, Carrier and Attribute followed by Actor are the dominant participants. The writer of the text use the dominance of Material Process and Relational:Attributive Process and the role of Carrier and Attribute to show a focus on concrete doing and happening and states of being. The poem by Emily Dickinson entitled "I Cannot Live with You" mostly uses Circumstance of Accompaniment to tell with(out) who or what accompanies the main participant in an action or state, thereby providing additional context or detail about the situation in which the action or state occurs. According to the experiential meaning in the field of discourse that includes types of process, participants, and circumstances, the researchers identified that the discourse of the poem encompassed the experiential domain, short-term goals, and long-term goals. The experiential domain in Emily Dickinson's poem entitled "I Cannot Live with You" is explain about the character "I" is telling the reader that the couple mentioned in the poem was apart because their live are discarded. Therefore, to shut the other gaze down, they need to stand by and close each other eyes to make them meet apart, the character "I" is here in Hell and the character "you" is there in Heaven. The short-term goal of the poem is to describe that the poem's speaker tells a beloved that they "cannot live" together, not because their love is insufficient, but because it is overpowering. Additionally, the long-term goal of the poem is for the writer to imply to the reader that love is a thing that can not last forever.

The researchers recognized that there remain several weaknesses and limitations in this study. Building on the discussion and analysis in the previous chapter, the researchers wish to provide the following guidance to readers or fellow researchers contemplating a thesis or similar project utilizing the transitivity process. Future researchers who are interested in exploring the same topic can find valuable insights in this study. The researchers discovered new perspectives on transitivity analysis, especially within specific types of texts. Identifying the gaps and limitations in this study enables future researchers to innovate, refine, or even establish new theoretical frameworks for analyzing similar subjects. By tackling unanswered questions and areas where previous research is incomplete, they can introduce fresh viewpoints and advance the field in their studies.

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