

**Functional Stylistic Analysis of Cather's A Singer Romance****Sahab Rashid Salman**

sahabrashed@gmail.com

**Prof. Baida' Faisal Noori (Ph.D)**

University of Baghdad/ College of Arts

**Abstract**

This paper aims to identify and analyze the processes of transitivity which are employed in A Singer Romance, one of the most salient American short stories in early twentieth century, which was written by a well-known American Writer, Willa Cather. This paper reveals how linguistic choices and structures, particularly, transitivity processes contribute to narrative meaning, emotional conflict and social issues. This study is based on Halliday and Matthiessen, (2014) framework, particularly, analysis of the six processes of transitivity to access deeply the meaning of the literary texts. The use and the distribution of the six process types vary in this text of this story to create variety of meanings and situations. This study is conducted quantitatively and qualitatively in order to show the deliberate usage of process types in relation to the narrative voice and the protagonist's struggle, physical dynamic external world and internal psychology.

**Keywords : Transitivity Analysis, Processes Types, Functional Stylistic**

تحليل أسلوب وظيفي لقصة قصيرة "رومانسية مغني" لكاتر

الباحثة: سحاب رشيد سلمان نجم تحت إشراف

جامعة بغداد/ كلية الآداب

**الملخص**

تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى تحديد وتحليل عمليات التعدية المستخدمة في قصة "رومانسية المغني"، إحدى أبرز القصص القصيرة الأمريكية في أوائل القرن العشرين، والتي

كتبتها الكاتبة الأمريكية المعروفة ويلا كاتر. تكشف هذه الورقة البحثية كيف تُسهم الخيارات والهياكل اللغوية، ولا سيما عمليات التعدية، في المعنى السردي والصراع العاطفي والقضايا الاجتماعية. تستند هذه الدراسة إلى إطار عمل هاليداي وماثيسن (٢٠١٤)، وتحديدًا إلى تحليل عمليات التعدية الست للوصول إلى عمق معنى النصوص الأدبية. يتنوع استخدام وتوزيع أنواع العمليات الست في نص هذه القصة لخلق معانٍ ومواقف متنوعة. أُجريت هذه الدراسة كمياً ونوعياً لإظهار الاستخدام المتعمد لأنواع العمليات في علاقتها بصوت السرد وصراع البطل، وديناميكية العالم الخارجي، وعلم النفس الداخلي. الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل الانتقالية، أنواع العمليات، الأسلوبية الوظيفية.

## 1. Introduction

A functional stylistics is an approach to language analysis that looks at how different writing or speaking styles fulfill distinct functions of communication in diverse circumstances. In the sense that how language functions in certain genres or registers, focusing on the connection between language choices and the purposes they fulfill in certain social, cultural or situational contexts. Short stories like any other piece of literature are written with the destination of emotional expressing, carrying sentimental values and creating images for sharing ideas or conveying the intended meanings. Consequently, writers choose their words and employ their pens for the purpose of determining the final touch on their writings. The genre of Cather's A Singer Romance is the psychological story type which focuses on the insight into human thoughts, feelings and conditions. In this story, Cather expresses the themes of loneliness, alienation, cultural displacement, lack of love and romance. Furthermore, this paper aims identify and then analyze processes of transitivity in A Singer Romance from the functional stylistic perspective. That means to answer questions like: what evident types of processes in A Singer Romance, and how their analysis helps interpret the construction of the character and theme in the story.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Story of A Singer Romance**

Cather's A Singer Romance is an influential and emotional short story that evolves around a German opera singer, Frau Selma Schumann who lacks emotional tenderness; in the sense that this forty two-year-old lady never experiences love or romance in her life. This bitter reality, which lacks emotions, love and romance and which causes her inner isolation and loneliness, pushes her to imagine a romantic relation with a tall, dark-haired man whose constant presence captivates her. Selma's captivation with the man makes her change her life style though it is a short period. She begins to take care of her appearance, complexion and health and so on at least. However, her romantic fantasy is vanished when she knows that she was wrong in her sense

feelings. The man was interested in Toinette, her young maid. It is a representative story of deprivation and sacrifice.

### **2.2 Functional Stylistics**

Stylistics is a branch of linguistics which takes its methodology from other branches of linguistics. For Chapman(1973:11), stylistics is simply "the linguistic study of different styles". As opposed to an "intuitive or impressionistic reaction" to a specific text, stylistics refers to a methodical, objective, and scientific study of style (Hickey, 1993:574). It is "a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language" (Simpson, 2004:2), where the unique distinctive linguistic expressions and the explanation of their function and impact are the focus(Verdonk, 2002:3). Stylistics is an interdisciplinary field, incorporating methods and techniques from a number of linguistic subfields, including discourse analysis, phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Simpson, 2014). In the scope of stylistics, the primary emphasis of stylistics is language. Thus, language is the main emphasis of stylistics. Verma(2015:336), on the other hand, argues that stylistics

is a part of language that is founded on a strategy that uses literature to create meaningful interpretations. That is how one may use linguistic aspects and literary theories to relate, analyze, and evaluate the language of the literary work and be able to infer the meaning that is naturally learned. Analyzing literary topics, character development, and narrative strategies demonstrates the synergy between function and stylistics. While stylistics gives a sophisticated grasp of the emotional and aesthetic implications of certain linguistic patterns, functional linguistics offers an organized understanding of how language functions inside texts. The term "functional stylistics " is a notion which describes an approach of analyzing literary texts that was proposed by M.A

. It views language as a coding technique for deciphering the meaning that is suggested in a certain context. Therefore, the meaning that is derived mostly from the context has the essential elements of functional stylistics (Lin, 2015). Building on Firth's Personality in Language and Society (1950) and Malinowski's (1923) work ,on the importance of situational context, Halliday (1971, 2004 ,1994 ,1985) is frequently given credit for creating the central idea of functionalist stylistics.

### **3. Methodology**

Drawing on Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), this paper reaches its conduct of functional stylistic analysis of Cather's A Singer Romance. Riazi (2016: 336) asserts that "a fundamental consideration in any research study should be the unit of analysis, that is, the focus of the study and the basis for analysis." Therefore, the analysis unit is the clause. Mackenzie(2020: 183) suggests that the contribution of the sentences to the text determine their analysis. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014 : 68) state that one mechanism, like process type, encompasses creating 'text score' for each analyzed text. In other words, the same lexical items can represent material or mental processed depending on mood, participants configurations and contextual framing. For the

analysis of data, quantitative and qualitative analyses are considered, drawing on Halliday's transitivity system.

#### **4. Data Analysis**

##### **4.1 Excerpt from the story**

*The rain fell in torrents and the great stream of people which poured out of the Metropolitan Opera House stagnated about the doors and seemed*

*effectually checked by the black line of bobbing umbrellas on the sidewalk... The entrance was fairly blockaded... As she stepped out of the door, the wind caught the black lace mantilla wound about her head and lifted it high in the air in such a ludicrous fashion that the substantial soprano cut a figure much like a malicious Beardsley poster... He was a tall man, slender and graceful, and he looked as dark as a Spaniard in the bright light... This Signorino's reserve puzzled her more than his persistence... He had grown so familiar to her that she knew the outline of his head and shoulders a square away, and in the densest crowd her eyes instantly singled him out. She looked for him so constantly that she knew she would miss him if he should not appear. Yet he made no attempt whatever to address her... By every doorstep, at every corner, wherever she turned, whenever she looked out of a window, she encountered always the dark Signorino, with his picturesque face and Spanish eyes... It is too much, 'Toinette, too much,' she sobbed... Toinette's youth and freshness irritated her tonight: She could not help wondering—but then this man was probably a man of intelligence, quite proof against the charm of mere prettiness... Selma Schumann was a singer without a romance. No one felt the incongruity of this more than she did, yet she had lived to the age of two- and- forty ... Her father had been a professor of etymology in a German university and she had inherited something of his taste... Since the shadow of the dark Signorino had fallen across her path, the routine of her life hitherto as*

*fixed as that of the planets or of a German housewife, had become less rigid and more variable... Then she dried her eyes and railed at Fortune in deep German polysyllables, gesturing like an enraged Valkyrie.*

**4.2 Experiential Analysis ( Transitivity )** Transitivity analysis investigates how meaning is constructed by a narrative through processes (verbs), participants and circumstances. Following Halliday and Matthiessen's Model (2014), the six process types are: material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal and existential. These six processes of Transitivity shape the thematic depth and the character dynamics in the selected short stories. Applying transitivity in a literary study helps reveal encoding the agency, power development and perception in the short story text.

Quantitatively, the table below shows that material processes are the most dominant transitivity type, they rank (48.64), followed by relational processes (24.32%), then mental processes (18.91%). Other types of transitivity show less occurrence, like behavioral processes (5.40%) and verbal processes (2.70%) whereas the existential process is absent (0%).

**Table ( 4.1 ) : Numbers and Frequency of Process Types in A Singer**

**Romance:**

Process Type	Frequency	Percentage
Material	18	48.64
Relational	9	24.32
Mental	7	18.91
Behavioral	2	5.40
Verbal	1	2.70
Existential	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100%</b>

It is noted from the above table that the material processes are the most

usable type in comparison with other types of transitivity. The dominance of material processes emphasizes the authority and the dynamic physical scene of chaos, for example, ***The rain fell in torrents.*** The function of this material process dominates the passage to describe the dynamic and physical chaos, movement and struggle against the external forces as antagonists and this reinforces realism and naturalism. Also in ***the great stream of people which poured out of the Metropolitan Opera House stagnated about the doors,*** material process describes the crowd movement of people as chaos. Another mark of pivotal action in material processes , that is of exposure to the storm as in ***As she stepped out of the door, the wind caught the black lace mantilla wound about her head and lifted it high in the air in such a ludicrous fashion that the substantial soprano cut a figure.*** This reflects the conflict of nature as how the nature upsets her respect emphasizing the idiocy of the moment and showing peculiar effect. Relational processes link participants via identity or circumstance to provide characterization (like appearance, moods) and settings details. The relational processes as in ***He was a tall man, slender and graceful*** establishes the imposing yet graceful presence of this man as well as the social and cultural relevance. Also in ***Selma Schumann was a singer,*** the absence of romance constructs tragic identity. Also in relational process ***He looked as dark as a Spaniard,*** it describes Frau Schumann ' exoticism of the Signorino as being attractive and carrying unusual qualities.

Mental processes, which are the internal activities like thinking, perceiving and cognition, shape emotions, behavior and world understanding. For example, ***No one felt the incongruity more than she did,*** the comparison ***more than*** alongside the absolute negation ***No one*** dominates the protagonist' s sensitivity, loneliness and suffering from being misunderstood by others. Als

***She looked for him so constantly***, it expresses Schumann's desire to maintain her searching as forever.

Behavioral processes capture involuntary actions like smiling or laughing that humanize characters. For example, ***gesturing like an enraged Valkyrie***, it refers to Selma's behavior of lamenting her sever fate. The lowest use of behavioral processes indicate disintegrated selves as well as confirming the hopeless reality.

Verbal processes are processes in which clauses reveal the act of speaking For example, ***and railed Fortune in deep German polysyllables***, it describes Schumann's disappointment and her blame on luck saying it in her German language, it is a hint of educational range which is embodied in code\_ switching and to emphasize lamenting her luck and fate.

Existential processes construe the meaning of existence. Existential process is typically structured by "*there*" as a dummy subject. According to this excerpt, the existential process is null. The only once use of verbal , the only twice use of behavioral processes and the absence of existential processes refer to the minimizing of the inner thoughts and dialogues, in return, emphasizing the external actions and conflict . Furthermore, the dominance of these material and mental processes embody the conflict and tension between the inner world of the character represented in obsession and irritation, from one side, and the external worldview of actions represented in nature like rain, storm, and wind from the other side.

**Table ( 4.2 ): *Experiential Analysis of Cather's A Singer Romance***

Clause Type	Elements	Function
1. <i>The rain fell in torrents</i> (material )	Actor : The rain Material : fell	physical and dynamic event of

	Circumstance : in torrents	the scene
--	----------------------------	-----------



2_ <i>and the great stream of people which poured out of the Metropolitan Opera House</i> (material)	Actor : the great stream of people which Material : poured Circumstance : out of the Metropolitan Opera House	emphasizes the crowd of people as an intensive as liquid to reflect the dynamic world.
3_ <i>stagnated about the doors</i> (material)	Actor : [ The rain ] Material : stagnated Circumstance : about the doors	emphasizes the crowd and the chaos of movement.
4_ <i>and seemed effectually checked by the black line of bobbing umbrellas on the side _walk</i> ( relational )	Carrier : [ It ] Relational : seemed Attribute : effectually Checked Circumstance : by the black line of bobbing umbrellas on the side _walk	reflects the activity of umbrellas as agents
5_ <i>The entrance was fairly blockaded</i> (material)	Actor : The entrance Material : was blockaded Circumstance : fairly	affects an observable impact in the physical worldview
6_ <i>As she stepped out of the Door</i> (material)	Actor : She Material : stepped Circumstance : out of the Door	reflects the conflict of nature in which upsets her respect is emphasized by the silliness of the

		moment and showing peculiar effect.
7_ <i>the wind caught the black lace mantilla wound about her head</i> (material)	Actor : the wind Material : caught Goal : the black lace mantilla wound about her head	refers to the physical external event which disorders and confuses the setting and the character 's

		presentation
8_ <i>and lifted it high in the air in such a ludicrous fashion</i> (material)	Actor : [ The wind ] Material : lifted Circumstance : high in the air in such a ludicrous fashion	intensifies the humorous tone of the action which is done by the wind
9_ <i>that the substantial soprano cut a figure much like a malicious Beardsley poster</i> (material)	Actor : the substantial soprano Material : cut Goal : a figure much like a malicious Beardsley poster	compares Frau Schumann to Beardsley poster to reduce her character
10_ <i>He was a tall man, slender and graceful</i> (relational)	Carrier: He Relational : was Attribute : a tall man, slender and graceful	contributes to Signorino based on Selma's narrative psychology
11_ <i>and he looked as dark as a Spaniard in the bright</i>	Carrier: He Relational : looked Attribute : as dark as	highlights the romantic description of Signorino

<i>light</i> (relational)	a Spaniard Circumstance : in the bright light	
12_ <i>This Signorino's reserve puzzled her more than his persistence</i> ( mental )	Senser : [ she ] Mental : puzzled Phenomenon : This Signorino's reserve Circumstance : more than his persistence	highlights emotion via comparison
13_ <i>He had grown so familiar to her</i> (relational)	Carrier: He Relational : had grown Attribute : so familiar to her	describes Selma's progression of emotion and passion for Signorino

14_ <i>that she knew the outline of his head and shoulders a square away</i> (mental)	Senser : she Mental : knew Phenomenon : the outline of his head and shoulders Circumstance : square away	characterizes Selma's psychological and romantic stability
15_ <i>in the densest crowd her eyes instantly singled him out</i> (material)	Actor : her eyes Material : singled out Goal : him Circumstance : in the densest crowd instantly	refers to an obsessive action via interest in Signorino
16_ <i>She looked for him so Constantly</i> (mental)	Senser : She Mental : looked for Goal : him	conveys internal desire through habitual action

	Circumstance : so Constantly	
17_ <i>that she knew she would miss him</i> (mental)	Senser : she Mental : knew Phenomenon : she would miss him	realizes the need for emotion and uncertainty of love and happiness
18_ <i>if he should not appear</i> ( behavioral )	Behaver : he Behavioral: should not appear Circumstance : if	describes an action of being present or coming that depends on condition
19_ <i>Yet he made no attempt whatever to address her</i> (material)	Actor: he Material : Goal : made no attempt to address her Circumstance : whatever	indicates an action which is not done absolutely
20_ <i>By every doorstep, at every corner, wherever she turned</i> (material)	Actor: she Material : turned Circumstance : By every doorstep, at every corner, wherever	depicts the habitual action that reinforces Selma's passion for Signorino
21_ <i>whenever she looked out of a window</i>	Behaver : she Behavioral: looked out	indicates habitual time of an action

(behavioral)	Circumstance : whenever, out of a window	
22_ <i>she encountered always the dark Signorino, with his picturesque face and Spanish</i>	Actor: she Material : encountered Goal : the dark Signorino, Circumstance : always,	gives an evidence of his absence, i.e., an evidence of his picture which remains

<i>eyes</i> (material)	with his picturesque face and Spanish eyes	present and constant
23_ <i>"It is too much, Toinette, too much "</i> (relational)	Carrier : It Relational : is Attribute : too much	reflects a direct outburst and psychological fatigue
24_ <i>she sobbed</i> (behavioral)	Behaver : she Behavioral : sobbed	expresses involuntary physical action of emotion
25_ <i>Toinette's youth and freshness irritated her tonight</i> (mental)	Senser : her Mental : irritated Phenomenon : Toinette's youth and freshness Circumstance: tonight	shows comparison or juxtaposition of Selma 's fatigue with vital youth
26_ <i>she could not help Wondering</i> (mental)	Senser : she Mental : could not help Wondering Phenomenon : implied idea	indicates involuntary cognitive activity
27_ <i>but then this man was probably a man of intelligence, quite proof against the charm of mere prettiness</i> (relational)	Carrier : this man Relational : was Attribute : a man of intelligence, quite proof against the charm of mere prettiness Circumstance: probably	refers to uncertain epistemic of Signorino
28_ <i>Selma Schumann was a singer without a romance</i> (relational)	Carrier: Selma Schumann Relational : was Attribute : a singer	represents the gist of the story since the title of this short

	without a romance	story is "A Singer Romance"
29_ <i>No one felt the incongruity of this</i> (material)	Senser : No one Mental : felt Phenomenon : the incongruity of this	describes Selma's self- awareness of the surroundings
30_ <i>more than she did</i> (mental)	Senser : she Mental : did [ felt ] Phenomenon : [ the incongruity of this ] Circumstance: more than	embodies and asserts the same theme in the previous main clause
31_ <i>yet she had lived to the age of two – and – forty</i> (material)	Actor: she Material : had lived Circumstance: two – and – forty	emphasizes Selma's lateness of her romance
32_ <i>Her father had been a professor of etymology in a German University</i> (relational)	Carrier: Her father Relational : had been Attribute : a professor of etymology Circumstance: in a German University	shows Selma's background and her upbringing
33_ <i>she had inherited something of his taste</i> (material)	Actor: she Material : had inherited Goal : something of his taste	Indicates inherited behavioral values
34_ <i>Since the shadow of the dark Signorino had fallen</i>	Actor: the shadow of the dark Signorino	creates a mental state of passion

<i>across her path</i> (material)	Material : had fallen Circumstance: Since across her path	
--------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------	--

35_ <i>the routine of her life hitherto as fixed as that of the planets or of a German housewife had become less rigid and more variable</i> (relational)	Carrier: the routine of her life Relational : had become Attribute : less rigid and more variable Circumstance : hitherto as fixed as that of the planets or of a German housewife	depicts awareness of emotion and accepts the shock. This reflects the fixation of her life style without change at all
36_ <i>Then she dried her eyes</i> (material)	Actor: she Material : dried Goal : her eyes Circumstance: Then	refers to controlling emotions and building self-confidence
37_ <i>and railed at Fortune in deep German polysyllables, gesturing like an enraged Valkyrie</i> ( verbal and behavioral )	Sayer: [ she ] Verbal : railed Verbiage : at Fortune in Circumstance : in deep German polysyllables Behaver : [ she ] Behavioral : gesturing Circumstance: like an enraged Valkyrie	indicates blaming the severe luck by using German phrases and mythical symbol to lament her fate

## 5. Conclusion

Cather's story shows the dominance of material processes. Material processes (48.64%) in *A Singer Romance* activates a physical dynamic external world representing in the chaos of people crowd and the force of nature, for example, The rain fell in torrents and stream of people which poured out of the.... Thus, the protagonist 's isolation and psychological displacement are embodied. Schumann' s illusion and lack of romance are embodied via the exaggeration of nature's interference, for example, the wind caught the black lace mantilla... and lifted it high in the air, in the sense that the scene is dramatized the loss of respect and dignity. In *A Singer Romance*, mental processes (18.91%) refers to longing, obsession and disappointment, for example, she knew she would miss him, In *A Singer Romance*, relational processes characterize qualities, for example, Selma is a singer without a romance. Cather employs material processes in order to frame her

characters in an inevitable environment which causes chaos and upsetting Schumann's respect and dignity. Cather's *A Singer Romance*, mental processes add to the protagonist emotional isolation and obsessive perception of Signorino.

## Reference

Chapman, R. (1973). *Linguistics and literature: An introduction to literary stylistics*. Edward Firth, J. R., (1950). *Personality and language in society*. Reprinted (1957) in J.

R. Firth. *Papers in linguistics* (1934\_1951). Oxford University Press.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1971). *Linguistic Function and Literary Style: An Inquiry in William Golding's "The inheritors"*. In *Literary style: A symposium*, ed. Seymour Chatman, pp. 330–65. Oxford University Press

Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). *An Introduction to functional grammar*. Edward Arnold.

Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Hickey, L. (1993). *Stylistics, Pragmatics and Pragmastylistics*. In *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 573–8.

Lin, B. (2015). *Functional stylistics*. In V. Sotirova (Ed.) *The Bloomsbury companion to stylistics*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Mackenzie, L. (2020). *Functional Approach*. In *The Handbook of English Grammar* Aarts, B., J., Bowie, & G., Popova. (Eds). (4th ed.) United Kingdom: Oxford Press. Malinowski, B. (1923). *The Problem of meaning in primitive language*. In C. K. Ogden & I. A. Richards (Eds.) *The meaning of meanings*. Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Riazi, M. A. (2016). *The routledge encyclopedia of research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research*. Routledge.

Simpson, P. (2004). *Stylistics: A resource book for students*. London: Routledge.

Verdonk, P. (2002). *Stylistics*. Oxford University Press.

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 15:8

August 2015 Meenakshi H. Verma, Ph.D. *A Stylistic Approach to Teaching Literature at the College Level*