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Transitivity in the Literature of Prisons: A Corpus Stylistic Study

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Abstract

This work extensively explores how language actually constitutes identity, power, agency, and resistance in two important prison autobiographies: *A Sense of Freedom* by Jimmy Boyle and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. The study looks at the way in which the authors build their experience of imprisonment through language. Thus, by exploring the 6 forms of processes of transitivity of Material, Mental, Relational, Verbal, Behavioural, and Existential, the study derives how these authors discuss their own experiences in prison. From the two books twelve excerpts were carefully selected, to point where common linguistic patterns and ideological themes could be found. In the search, there are clearly two images of life in prison. In *A Sense of Freedom*, Boyle life was placed on the systematic violence and physical domination on the prison wall, and a heavy dependency on Material Processes which present him as a passive person, which he is moulded on outside influences. Once more, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* emphasises Mental and Relational Processes that reflect his self-discovery, intellectual awakening, and empowering personal journey. This paper addresses the question of how figures of transitivity decide how to represent the issue of power and confrontation in these storeys and provides us with spirited insights into how language defines who we are, how we are managed by institutions, and how we use our own agency in relation to imprisonment

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The results acknowledge that as much as there is grief highlighted in the narrative by Boyle, future research should employ a larger corpus, which adopts a broader corpus-based methodology in terms of comparing and analysing prison narratives on a broader front. Lastly, this paper brings into limelight the strength of words in mirroring oppression, questioning institutions, and providing a platform of resistance and self empowerment amidst dehumanising systems.

Keywords: transitivity, systemic functional linguistics, Halliday, carceral discourse, autobiography, prison narratives, agency

التعددية في أدب السجون : دراسة أسلوبية قائمة على المدونات اللغوية

مؤيد تحسين يوسف

كلية التربية للبنات / جامعة الموصل

تعتمد هذه الدراسة على نظرية اللغويات الوظيفية النظامية التي وضعها هالبيدي (1994)، مع تركيز خاص على نظام التعددية (Transitivity) ، لتحليل كيفية تمثيل اللغة المفاهيم الأيديولوجيا، والفاعلية، والسلطة، والهوية، والمقاومة في سيرتين ذاتيتين تنتميان لأدب السجون : A Sense of Freedom وأنواع من العمليات - المادية The autobiography of Malcolm X للجيمي بويل Freedom The المادية - الذهنية، العلائقية اللفظية السلوكية، والوجودية - تسعى الدراسة إلى فهم كيفية بناء تجارب السجن على المستوى الخطابى. وقد جرى تحليل اثني عشر مقتطفًا مختارًا بعناية من كلا النصين، بهدف الكشف عن أنماط لغوية متكررة ودلالات أيديولوجية متجذرة. أظهرت النتائج أن : A Sense of Freedom يركز على العنف المنهجي والخضوع الجسدي، مع هيمنة للعمليات المادية التي يقدم فيها السارد غالبًا كهدف سلبي، في المقابل، تبرز autobiography of Malcolm X العمليات الذهنية والعلائقية، بما يعكس عملية التمكين المعرفي والتحول الذاتي. وتوضح الدراسة كيف تسهم اختيارات العبور في تشكيل تمثيلات السيطرة المؤسسية والمقاومة الفردية، مقدمة بذلك رؤية تحليلية معمقة للتفاعل بين اللغة والسلطة والهوية في سرديات السجن. وتوصي الدراسة بتوسيع نطاق البحوث المستقبلية لتشمل تحليلات قائمة على المدونات اللغوية ومقاربات مقارنة ضمن أدب السجون وتحليل الخطاب. وفي خاتمة المطاف، تكشف الدراسة عن الكيفية التي تستخدم بها اللغة في تمثيل القمع، والتجريد من الإنسانية، والقدرة على التحول في سياقات السجن، مع إبراز التباين السردى بين نصي بويل ومالكوم إكس؛ إذ يركز

الأول على المعاناة المفروضة والعنف المنهجي، بينما يُسلط الثاني الضوء على الوعي الفكري والتمكين الذاتي. وتؤكد الدراسة في مجملها على الدور المحوري للغة في تشكيل الفاعلية الفردية وممارسة النقد المؤسسي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعدية اللغويات الوظيفية النظامية، هاليدي، خطاب السجون، السيرة الذاتية، السرديات السجنية.

1. INTRODUCTION

Prison literature has long served as a powerful medium for exposing systemic oppression, institutional violence, and personal transformation (Foucault, 1977: 231). Autobiographical prison narratives provide firsthand accounts of the dehumanizing conditions within the carceral system while simultaneously offering reflections on resistance, identity, and redemption. Through linguistic analysis, particularly Halliday's (1994) transitivity system, scholars can examine how agency, power, and ideological positioning are encoded within prison narratives (Simpson, 1993: 45). This study applies a corpus stylistic approach to analyze transitivity patterns in *A Sense of Freedom* (Boyle, 1977) and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (Malcolm X & Haley, 1965), two influential prison memoirs that critique the legitimacy of incarceration in the UK and the USA.

Transitivity, a key component of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), investigates how language represents processes, participants, and circumstances in discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014: 215). In prison literature, transitivity choices influence how prisoners, guards, and institutions are depicted—whether as active agents, passive victims, or ideological constructs (Fairclough, 1995: 98). Previous studies have demonstrated that Material processes (actions and events) are often dominant in texts that depict violence and physical struggle, while Mental and Verbal processes frequently appear in introspective and ideological narratives (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010: 157). Given that Boyle's narrative centers on brutality and survival, and Malcolm X's memoir emphasizes intellectual awakening and political transformation, this study hypothesizes that their transitivity structures will reflect different linguistic patterns of agency and power.

By employing a corpus-assisted transitivity analysis, this research aims to uncover how both authors construct their prison experiences through linguistic choices. Specifically, it seeks to determine: (1) how power and resistance are represented through Material, Mental, and Relational processes; (2) how institutional oppression is framed linguistically; and (3) how both authors construct narratives of self-transformation. The findings will contribute to the broader field of critical discourse analysis, prison literature, and corpus stylistics, offering insights into the linguistic mechanisms of incarceration narratives in different sociopolitical contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of prison literature has gained increasing attention in literary and linguistic research, particularly in relation to narrative identity, resistance discourse, and systemic oppression (Wilson, 2004: 21). The linguistic analysis of prison texts provides insight into how authors frame their experiences of incarceration, shaping public perception and ideological resistance (Fairclough, 1995: 102). Corpus stylistics and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) offer robust methodologies for analyzing how language encodes power relations, agency, and resistance in prison narratives (Simpson, 1993: 57). This literature review will examine the existing scholarship on transitivity analysis, corpus stylistics, and prison literature, positioning the current study within this academic discourse.

Transitivity and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Transitivity, as Halliday's theorization (1994: 106) goes, is among the central features of SFL explaining how language represents process, participants, and circumstances. It categorizes verbs into six general process types:

- Material processes (actions, events) – e.g., *he fought, they imprisoned him*
- Mental processes (perception, cognition) – e.g., *he realized, she understood*
- Relational processes (identity, attribution) – e.g., *he was a prisoner, she became stronger*
- Verbal processes (speech, communication) – e.g., *he spoke out, she was told*
- Existential processes (expressing existence) – e.g., *there was no freedom, oppression existed*
- Physiological and psychological actions (behaviours) - e.g., *he sighed, they wept.*

Transitivity analysis has been employed by scholars to reveal ideological and political meaning in language (Fowler, 1996: 132). For instance, Toolan (2001: 86) illustrates that Material processes are dominant in violence and conflict texts, with Mental processes found in introspective narrative. This pattern holds true with prison writing, where physical control (Material processes) is balanced with personal transformation (Mental and Relational processes).

2.1 Corpus Stylistics and Literary Analysis

Corpus stylistics, which integrates quantitative linguistic tools with qualitative literary analysis, has proven valuable in studying narrative voice, agency, and ideological stance (Semino & Short, 2004: 73). A corpus-based approach enables researchers to:

1. Identify dominant process types in prison narratives.
2. Compare patterns of agency between prisoners and institutions.
3. Detect shifts in self-representation over the course of a narrative.

Previous studies have applied corpus stylistics to memoirs, historical narratives, and resistance literature (McIntyre, 2015: 49). However, few studies have systematically compared UK and US prison literature from a transitivity perspective, making this research particularly significant.

Prison Literature: Agency, Resistance, and Ideology

Prison memoirs often function as counter-narratives that challenge the dominant representations of the justice system (Foucault, 1977: 245). Studies in prison discourse emphasize that autobiographical prison texts reflect themes of:

- Brutality and institutional violence (Jewkes, 2002: 17).

- Resistance and survival strategies (Cheliotis, 2016: 292).

- Self-transformation and ideological awakening (Franklin, 1998: 69).

In *A Sense of Freedom*, Boyle (1977) describes his experiences in UK prisons, highlighting physical abuse, dehumanization, and resistance. Material processes are expected to dominate his text, reflecting his confrontational and action-driven perspective (Wilson, 2004: 33).

In contrast, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (Malcolm X & Haley, 1965) shifts from violence and crime to intellectual and ideological empowerment. Scholars note that Malcolm X's narrative relies heavily on Mental and Verbal processes as he reconstructs his identity through knowledge and political awakening (Harris, 2010: 155).

A comparative transitivity analysis of these texts will uncover how agency, power, and transformation are linguistically encoded in prison narratives.

Research Questions

1. How do transitivity patterns in *A Sense of Freedom* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* construct narratives of oppression, resistance, and transformation?
2. What are the dominant process types (Material, Mental, Relational, etc.) in each text, and how do they reflect the authors' perspectives on prison life?
3. How do the transitivity choices in each text contribute to the portrayal of power dynamics between prisoners and institutions?
4. What linguistic differences emerge in the representation of self-identity and ideological transformation in the two narratives?
5. To what extent do the transitivity patterns in these prison memoirs challenge or reinforce dominant social and political discourses on incarceration?

Research Objectives

1. To conduct a corpus stylistic transitivity analysis of *A Sense of Freedom* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.
2. To identify and compare the frequency of different process types (Material, Mental, Relational, etc.) in both texts.
3. To analyze the representation of agency—who is depicted as acting, who is acted upon, and how power is distributed in each text.
4. To examine how self-transformation is linguistically constructed in each author's journey from criminalization to self-reformation.
5. To explore how prison literature reflects broader ideological struggles related to race, class, justice, and institutional power.

Research Hypotheses

1. Material processes will dominate in *A Sense of Freedom*, while Mental and Verbal processes will be more frequent in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.
 - *Rationale:* Boyle's narrative is action-driven, highlighting violence and direct confrontation, whereas Malcolm X's transformation is intellectual and ideological.
2. Prison institutions and authority figures will be portrayed using Material processes (actions of control, punishment), while prisoners will exhibit more Mental and Relational processes

(reflection, identity construction).

- *Rationale:* Institutional power is often expressed through action, while prisoners navigate imprisonment through thought and identity shifts.
- 3. The transitivity choices in Malcolm X's text will emphasize ideological awakening and self-empowerment, while Boyle's text will focus more on survival and systemic brutality.
 - *Rationale:* Malcolm X presents prison as a place of transformation, whereas Boyle presents it as a site of extreme violence and resistance.
- 4. The representation of self-identity will shift in both texts, moving from objectified prisoner status (acted upon) to self-assertive agency (acting upon the world).
 - *Rationale:* Both authors narrate a personal transformation, but through different linguistic strategies.
- 5. Despite their differences, both texts will ultimately challenge dominant narratives of prison as a rehabilitative institution.
 - *Rationale:* The texts expose the contradictions in prison systems that claim to reform but often reinforce cycles of violence and oppression.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative linguistic analysis rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), focusing specifically on the transitivity system outlined by Halliday (1994). The methodology is interpretive in nature and centers on close textual analysis of selected excerpts from two autobiographies: *A Sense of Freedom* by Jimmy Boyle and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (as told to Alex Haley). Both texts were chosen due to their strong autobiographical focus on incarceration and self-transformation, making them particularly suitable for analysis of how language shapes identity and agency within institutional settings.

3.1 Data Selection

Although the two texts span approximately 400 pages in total, the selection of 12 excerpts is methodologically sound for several reasons. First, this study applies a qualitative transitivity analysis rooted in Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which involves meticulous clause-by-clause annotation of process types, participant roles, and circumstantial elements. This means that even a single excerpt can yield multiple layers of meaning that require extensive unpacking. Second, the 12 excerpts were not selected arbitrarily—they represent critical narrative moments that encapsulate the thematic and ideological essence of both works (e.g., identity transformation, institutional oppression, resistance). Each excerpt was chosen to reflect a variety of process types (Material, Mental, Relational, etc.) and to ensure thematic balance between the two texts. Lastly, in alignment with practices in qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis, the goal is not statistical generalization but interpretive depth and representative sampling. Including significantly more examples would risk superficial analysis, undermining the linguistic richness this method aims to uncover. So, the selection was based on their thematic relevance to:

- The experience of imprisonment,
- The construction of selfhood and resistance, and
- The transformative role of language, education, or systemic oppression.

3.2 Analytical Procedure

Each excerpt was analyzed for its transitivity structure, focusing on:

- The type of process used (Material, Mental, Relational, Verbal, Behavioral, or Existential),
- The participants involved (e.g., Actor, Goal, Senser, Carrier, Sayer),
- The circumstances accompanying the processes (e.g., time, place, manner). Annotations followed Halliday's terminology and framework. For example:
- “*They beat me until I passed out*” was coded as a Material Process, with *They* as Actor, *me* as Goal, and “*until I passed out*” as a Circumstance of result.
- “*Books became my world*” was labeled as a Relational Process, with *Books* as Carrier and *my world* as Attribute.

3.3 Interpretive Lens

The transitivity analysis didn't just stand on its own; it was interpreted within a critical discourse framework, drawing on the ideas of scholars like Fairclough (1995) and van Leeuwen (2008). These scholars argue that the way we choose to use grammar says a lot about power relationships and where we stand ideologically. So, each type of process wasn't just analyzed in a vacuum—it was examined in the context of the larger themes of the narratives, such as dehumanization, resistance, and rebirth, all while keeping in mind the social and historical contexts in which these stories were told. Through this method, the paper provides a more comparative and detailed summary of how two men with different sociopolitical backgrounds use language to negotiate their identities, power dynamics, and individual changes within the prison setting.

3.4 Theoretical Framework: Halliday's Transitivity System

The primary concept of the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) proposed by Halliday (1994) is that language ensures that three important things are achieved: It allows us to represent our experiences, create relations and structure information in a manner that can be perceived as meaning. The ideational metafunction is that aspect of language which is concerned with the expression of our experiences. It is the mirror of the grammar of transitivity, i.e. how the sentences are constructed to express actions, who does what and who or what is the victim of such actions. Transitivity in this case does not refer to the way a verb can assume an object but the way language can interpret processes (actions, states, feelings). It contains the people who take part in such actions, and the conditions under which they find themselves. Anyhow, Halliday identifies six main process types:

1. **Material Processes:** processes of doing—actions and events that include an Actor (the doer) and often a Goal (the recipient or target of the action). *Example:* **“They locked me in solitary confinement.”* _ → Actor: *They*, Process: *locked*, Goal: *me*.
2. **Mental Processes:** These involve cognition, perception, emotion, and include participants like the Senser (experiencer) and the Phenomenon (that which is sensed).
Example: **“The prison wanted to break me.”* _ → Senser: *The prison*, Phenomenon:
3. **Relational Processes:** These express states of being and having, involving participants like the Carrier and Attribute (in attributive relations) or Identified and Identifier (in identifying relations).
Example: **“Books became my world.”* _ → Carrier: *Books*, Attribute: *my world*.
4. **Verbal Processes:** Processes of saying, involving a Sayer, a Receiver, and a Verbiage.

*Example: *"I screamed, but no one heard me." _ → Sayer: I, Verbal process: screamed.*

5. Behavioral Processes: These are physiological or psychological behaviors, often sitting between material and mental processes. They usually involve one participant (the Behaver).

Example: "I laughed," "She sighed."

6. Existential Processes: These express the existence of something, using "there is/are/was/were." The Existent is the entity that is said to exist. *Example: "There was no hope." → Process: was, Existent: no hope.*

Within transitivity analysis, these processes do not just designate actions or states—they also place individuals in detailed roles (active, passive, empowered, oppressed), determining how experience is built and understood. In prison narratives, transitivity helps express how language echoes deeper ideologies, such as the power of institutions, personal control, trauma, and the fight for struggle. By looking at *A Sense of Freedom* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* through this lens, the aim is to reveal how these two men, locked behind prison walls, use language not just to share their experiences, but also to retrieve their identities in the face of a system that attempts to obliterate them.

4. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

4.1 Textual Analysis of *A Sense of Freedom*

Jimmy Boyle's *A Sense of Freedom* proposes a rare and powerful account of life in prison, unfolding the brutality, psychological pain, and dehumanization he challenged. Using the transitivity framework, we can see how Boyle's story not only mirrors the fierceness of the system but also helps as a way for him to repossess his sense of self. This section looks at six carefully chosen extracts, each stresses a different aspect of his journey and his changing relationship with the institutional power around him.

Excerpt 1: "They held me in isolation for an extended period."

This humble yet influential line captures the loneliness and control Boyle faced, and assists as an early point for understanding how his language shapes his developing sense of identity within the prison system.

- Material Process: *locked*
- Actor: *They* (prison authorities)
- Goal: *me*
- Circumstance: *in solitary confinement for weeks*

In this sentence, the material process shows Boyle as the passive recipient—he's the one being acted upon. This highlights the overwhelming, one-sided nature of the power the prison system has over him. The Actor (the ones doing the locking, "they") is left faceless and plural, emphasizing that it's not just one person but the collective force of the entire prison system that's exerting this control over him. The Circumstance amplifies the cruelty, portraying solitary

confinement not as a brief punishment but as sustained isolation.

Excerpt 2: “The prison wanted to break me, but I swore I wouldn’t let it.”

- Mental Process 1: *wanted* → Senser: *The prison*, Phenomenon: *to break me*
- Mental Process 2: *swore* → Senser: *I*, Phenomenon: *I wouldn’t let it*

This juxtaposition of two Mental Processes demonstrates a struggle of wills. The prison is personified as a Senser capable of desire (*wanted*), showing the institution as ideologically driven to dominate. In contrast, Boyle’s response (*I swore...*) marks a reclamation of agency, asserting resistance not through action but through volition and inner resolve.

Excerpt 3: “They stripped me naked and left me on the concrete floor, cold and bleeding.”

- Material Processes: *stripped, left*
- Actor: *They*
- Goal: *me*
- Circumstance: *on the concrete floor, cold and bleeding*

This excerpt is a vivid representation of material brutality. The dual processes—*stripped* and *left*—portray Boyle as an object acted upon. The Circumstances convey both physical setting and bodily suffering, reinforcing themes of degradation and loss of bodily autonomy. The repeated use of “They” reinforces the depersonalized nature of institutional violence.

Excerpt 4: “The system made me into something I wasn’t.”

- Material Process: *made*
- Actor: *The system*
- Goal: *me*
- Attribute/Result: *into something I wasn’t*

This transformation process reflects forced identity alteration. “The system” acts not only upon Boyle’s body, but upon his self-concept. The process here is deceptively material, but semantically it engages with relational implications—showing how external forces construct or deform identity.

Excerpt 5: “They beat me until I passed out.”

- Material Process: *beat*
- Actor: *They*
- Goal: *me*
- Circumstance: *until I passed out*

This line typifies extreme physical violence. The process again renders Boyle as passive, with the Actor exerting unchecked control. The Circumstance (*until I passed out*) communicates the extent and consequence of abuse, emphasizing the total collapse of consciousness—an erasure of awareness and autonomy.

Excerpt 6: “I screamed, but no one heard me.”

- Verbal Process: *screamed*

- Sayer: *I*
- Verbal Process: *heard*
- Sayer: *no one*, Receiver: *me*

This shift to verbal processes marks a moment where Boyle attempts to reclaim voice—but the second clause (*no one heard me*) reveals the failure of communication and institutional apathy. The use of “no one” as Sayer highlights the absence of empathy and responsiveness, underscoring Boyle’s voicelessness in the system. Across these excerpts, Material Processes dominate, emphasizing Boyle’s passivity and objectification within the prison system. He is frequently positioned as Goal or Affected, while the system or prison staff are abstracted Actors. However, scattered Mental and Verbal Processes offer glimpses of resistance and internal struggle, suggesting that even in a context of extreme repression, there remains a psychological battleground for identity and autonomy.

4.2 Textual Analysis of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X ...*

While *A Sense of Freedom* foregrounds institutional violence and the stripping of agency, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* offers a contrasting narrative—one of personal awakening and self-empowerment, especially through education. Through the lens of Halliday’s transitivity framework, Malcolm X’s language choices reveal a cognitive and relational transformation, with an increasing emphasis on Mental, Relational, and Material Processes that affirm identity and growth.

Excerpt 1: “I picked up a book in prison.”

- Material Process: *picked up*
- Actor: *I*
- Goal: *a book*
- Circumstance: *in prison*

This is a basic material procedure that represents the beginning of the intellectual journey of Malcolm. Unlike

Boyle is a passive spectator in many situations, Malcolm is the Actor, accepting responsibility and showing that he can do it despite the limitations of prison. The gesture is trivial in itself, the result is profound--it initiates the change that sustains itself in the remainder of his storey.

Excerpt 2: "Books turned out to be my universe.

This marks a moment when the power of the familiar ends in Malcolm and the journey. begins to visualise his uniqueness and symbolises the beginning of his self empowerment.

Relational Process: *became*

Carrier: *Books*

Attribute: *my world*

This is a relational process that points out an important shift in the individuality of Malcolm. it demonstrates how

he begins to become aware of the world. Books are not something he used to read--they have

become important to his reality. It is obvious when he says my world, he is observing the very essence of what he is reading. Not merely the acquisition of knowledge, but a deep one.

pricey association and a sort of revolution in his perception. This signs a move from living in goal to living a good life as an intellectual.

Excerpt 3: They gave me something never felt before-- power through knowledge."

Material Process : gave

o Subject: Actor: They (figuratively speaking of books)

o Goal: me

o Period: something never felt before--power by knowledge.

• Cognitive Process (embedded): felt.

This puts material and mental elements to the test. The books are alive, that is the part of Actors, and Malcolm has a doubled part of both Goal and Senser. The power through knowledge is a term used to refer to the revolutionary power that comes with literacy. However, unlike Boyle, who is a passive victim of aggression, Malcolm is brought out to be the one who attains authorization via learning.

Excerpt 4: "I was no longer living to survive--I was thinking, analysing, preparing.

Relational Process: it was not simply there.

• Carrier: I, Attribute: only to be there.

• Mental Processes: preparation, looking and thinking.

The line itself is important with regards to a turning point. The negation reflects a rejection of survival in prison in favour of the active construction of his life. The enumeration of thoughts processes is an indication of a shift in the way he perceives the world mentally. With self-awareness and knowledge-based growth (i.e. creating himself up again) Malcolm has defined himself through opposition and, as a result, his individuality has been constructed around it.

Excerpt 5: "I read every spare moment that I got.

• Material Process: spent

• Actor: I

• Goal: every free moment

• Circumstance: reading

This passage depicts the determination and commitment of Malcolm. He is the Actor who is taking his own time and focusing it on self-development. During this stage, the material process will ensure that his education was not a chance thing that happened--but it was the outgrowth of planned action. This shows that it is not an instantaneous phenomenon; but a type of thing which is accomplished by absolute effort and by practise.

Excerpt 6: "People have never seen a book before, as though I never saw a book."

•Relational Process: was

Carrier: *It*, Attribute: *as if I had never really seen a book before*

• Mental Process (embedded): *seen*

This final echo uses a relational process to direct a sense of wonder and new understanding. It displays how Malcolm's former views were inadequate, and how, paradoxically, imprisonment became a place of personal rebirth. The mental process within it highlights both an emotional and intellectual emergent. Malcolm X's story blends Material, Mental, and Relational Processes, capturing both the outside actions he takes and the inner transformation he undergoes. He is often the Actor or Senser, showing that he is always in control and making choices. Unlike Boyle, whose story is largely about suffering and being objectified, Malcolm's prison narrative is shaped by language that emphasizes reclaiming his identity, growth, and empowerment. His use of mental processes reflects a thoughtful and reflective self, while the relational processes highlight how his identity changes—from a street hustler to a self-educated visionary.

5. Thematic Comparison: Power, Resistance, and Transformation

When looking at the A Sense of Freedom and the Autobiography of Malcolm X through the prism of the Hallidayan transitivity, one can feel the presence of two unambiguously conflicting stories. They are predominantly the experiences of the writers themselves in prison. Both are prison autobiographies in the language in which they are written, i.e., two incompatible themes which are disclosed, one extreme the savageness and the dehumanisation of the system, the other the stories of intellectual renaissance and self-realisation.

5.1 Power and Control

In the storey of Jimmy Boyle, numerous Material Processes are accomplished in which the Goal is stated, i.e. invariably the recipient of the action of the oppressive system:

They put the padlock on me, they beat me, they took away my clothes.

The Material Processes of these external Actors (such as they, the system), they reproduce themselves and thus create a portrait of a world in which institutionally dominates physical subordination. In these scenes, Boyle has that sort of agency; he is being completed to instead of acting. Even in those few moments of conflict, such as "I swore I wouldn't let it" the context used still serves to remind him of his powerlessness, furthering the theme of a system that works on him.

The Malcolm X story abounds with flashes at contrast, in which he is Actor or Senser in Material and Mental Processes:

I picked up a book, I was spending time reading, I was thinking, analysing, preparing.

These possibilities show that in prison, too, Malcolm assumes control of his life. It is not his muscles that give him power, but his will and mind. Vocabulary creates a world where authority is power that rests on self-control and knowledge and creates yet another resistance- that which

rests on intellectual freedom and mental independence.

5.2. Resistance and Voice

This kind of confrontation is captured by Boyle through his verbal disobedience: "The goal was trying to make me bitter, and I vowed it would never happen to me.

The application of Mental and Verbal Processes, such as, wanted and swore, brings about a sense of psychological opposition at this point. But these are short periods and are framed by rigorous Material Processes that exacerbate the effects of his own will. His voice became institutionalised even during his screaming of defeat (I screamed, but nobody listened to me). Putting it another way, it accentuates his feeling of helplessness in the face of the system that does not hear him.

On the other hand, the conflict of Malcolm X is informed and extensive. The feedbacks to violence are not his Mental Processes, including thinking, analysing, and preparing, but conscious efforts to reinvent himself. His voice does not fall away--but it is manifested, and made harder as time goes, especially when he establishes books as sources of strength: "They gave me something I had never experienced before--strength through knowledge.

5.3 Identity and Transformation

Prison, for Boyle, creates his individuality to become fractured:

"The system made me into something I wasn't."

This Material Process proposes that his identity is forced upon him from the outside, lined up with the theme of losing himself in the prison system. The prison develops a place that erases and distorts his sense of self.

In contrast, Malcolm X's identity is reconstructed through reading and reflection: "Books became my world."

I was not living, I was thinking.

The Relational Processes, at this stage, are a selected change, and not an imposed one. Though threatening and physically restrictive, prison seems to be the venue of spiritual and intellectual liberation, in which Malcolm reconstructs him.

6. Finding and Discussion

This chapter transports the linguistic results of transitivity analysis of Jimmy Boyles *A Sense of Freedom* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. It is the twofold role of language, to create, to bind the experiences of individuals and to reflect the power and social processes of the masses.

6.1 Transitivity as a Reflex of Social Experience

The six types of processes that are used to represent the human experience are added to the model of Halliday (1994). Imensely dissimilar patterns of the processes are being presented in the life storeys of Boyle and Malcolm X witnessing dissimilar lived experiences:

The storey of Jimmy Boyle is dominated by Material Processes, i.e. external Actors (e.g., "They") operate on him, and he is the Goal, i.e. he suffers as a victim of institutional violence.

In comparison, Malcolm X, is the Actor or Senser of Mental, Material, and Relational Processes

and demonstrates how he comes to play an active role in the transformation of his own being, both mental and physical.

The departures expose the theoretical wholesale on which their linguistic selections are based: Boyle has a reality which he lives by, and Malcolm has a reality he constructs himself by introspection and intellectual effort.

6.2 Language as Resistance and Reclamation of Agency

In *A Sense of Freedom* transitivity patterns provided a stable description of systemic violence: Those sorts of lines that put Boyle again and again into the position of the passive victim of violence are the ones that say: They beat me, They locked me, They stripped me naked.

Linguistic decisions in support of the themes of dehumanisation and coercive power, in which the Actor (the system) is a featureless invincible object and the Goal (the prisoner) is a voiceless object.

This reflects the idea of Foucault regarding carceral power, when language creates a medium in which institutional domination is re-written into the life of a prisoner.

7. CONCLUSION

This This paper applied the Systemic functional linguistics developed by Halliday with a closer orientation to the transitivity system, to analyse how two influential prison autobiographies *A Sense of Freedom* by Jimmy Boyle and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* both are language of power, identity and resistance. The research found great patterns of transitivity that characterise the authors in various ways by reading the twelve wisely selected excerpts of six different types of processes.

In the case of Boyle, the excellence is mostly on Material Processes. It shows the repeated occasions where he is shown as the unfortunate victim of the violent elements which the prison regime inflicts upon him. Such violent wording emphasizes just how brutal the procedures performed were. It made him an instrument of manipulation. In totality, the description of diction by Boyle gives us a bleak image of prison as an objectification and oppressive place depending on the psychological disorder and inner struggle using Mental and Verbal Processes, Contrarywise, the account given by Malcolm X gives us expansion of his diction where more thoughtful Mental and Relational Processes were found than Material Processes. Malcolm X positions himself as such a dynamic subject--he is the Actor, Senser, and Carrier--by showing control over his own being and fighting the systematic arrangements that are exclusionary of him. This was achieved through the weapons of resistance in the form of knowledge and thought. The two tales however show how transitivity in language choice produces more than report lived lives--they are that type of an ideological critique of the power relations of prison regimes. This research was written to show clearly how these two prison stories are a self-reflection, but they are revolutionary in terms of resistance and challenge. They show everyone that they are a symbol of survival and struggle against the wrongful systems.

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