

Review Article

Transitivity Analysis of the Protagonist's Identity Construction in *Never Let Me Go* from the Perspective of Functional Grammar

Li Zhang^{1*} & Zixun Gao²

¹Professor School of Foreign Language, North China Electric Power University, NO.689 Road, North District, Baoding, Hebei, China

²Graduate Student of Foreign Language, North China Electric Power University, NO.689 Road, North District, Baoding, Hebei, China

Article History

Received: 04.07.2020

Accepted: 17.07.2020

Published: 28.07.2020

Journal homepage:

<https://www.easpublisher.com/easjhc>

Quick Response Code



Abstract: From the perspective of functional grammar, there are three metafunctions in language, experiential metafunction, interpersonal metafunction and textual metafunction (Halliday, M. A. K. 1994). This thesis will analysis the process of the protagonist's identity construction from transitivity in experiential metafunction, so as to reveal the transformation of the protagonist's identity and expose the process of identity construction. What's more, this thesis also gives a new perspective to analyze the literature works and demonstrates the feasibility and practicability of analyzing novels in transitivity from functional grammar.

Keywords: Identity Construction, Transitivity, Never Let Me Go, Transformation, Functional Grammar

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INTRODUCTION

Never Let Me Go was written by Kazuo Ishiguro. This fiction novel tells a story about clone humans who were born and raised in Hailsham, a boarding school of clone children in British. With the strict disciplines and rules in Hailsham, their lives were set out before their birth. Donating their organs to normal people is also the task of their lives. One of the clone girl Kathy-H looked back her whole life and told a story about her lives in Hailsham. Kathy's identity experienced three process and her identity also experienced from construction to disillusionment, a girl belong to Hailsham is her first identity, having friendship with other clone people is her second identity and the third identity of Kathy is work as a "carer" to care for the donated clone people. But all of her identities were disillusioned when all the clone people around her were dead. This paper will analyze Kathy's three times identity construction from transitivity in functional grammar.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Transitivity is a way to analyze the language from experiential metafunction. At present, people pay more attention on the speeches, poems and news in

transitivity theory. What's more, with the development of corpus, the transitivity system has become more practically in analyze literary works. From this point of view, this paper will summarize the previous study from transitivity theory of literary works in both domestic and abroad.

In China, the earlier study of transitivity in literature works focused on the analyze of news report. Some researchers use the theory of transitivity in text analysis or news analysis. For example, "Transitivity Analysis of Obama's Weekly Address from the Perspective of Systemic-Functional Grammar", and "A Transitivity Study of News Reports Themed 'One Belt One Road' Initiatives in Reuters". What's more, some researchers also use transitivity to analyze the poem in "Transitivity Analysis of DU Fu's 'A Welcome Rain on Spring Night' and its Three Versions from the Perspective of Systematic Functional Grammar".

In abroad, Halliday did first research in the novel of William Golding's *The Inheritors* in 1971, this research marked the beginning of the application of transitivity in text analysis. He analyzed the frequency of transitivity syntactic structures in the development of the novel's theme. From then on, the transitivity became more widely applied to the text analysis and

literature works. At present, the use of transitivity analysis in literature has been used to understand the language of writers and speakers in examining the depth of sentences and structures. Moreover, some researchers also attempted to explore the ways in which language structures can produce certain meaning which are not always explicit for readers (Mehmod, 2014). The purpose of this paper is to adopt Halliday’s transitivity system in analysis the process of Kathy’s identity construction in *Never Let Me Go* and observe the depth meaning of protagonist’s conversation.

TRANSITIVITY

For Halliday, language provides a theory of human experience (Halliday, 2014) and the experiential metafunction was realized by transitivity. The transitivity system can influence the process, participants and circumstance. This paper will adopt six processes of transitivity to analyze.

Fig 1

Process type	Core meaning	Participants
Material process	Doing; Happening	Actor
Mental process	Sensing	Sensor; Phenomenon
Relational process	Being; Having	Carrier; Attribute; Value; Token
Verbal process	Saying	Sayer
Behavioral process	Behaving	Behaver
Existential process	Existing	Existent

By using these six processes to analyze the conversation of *Never Let Me Go* can emphasize the process of Kathy’s identity construction

TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS: THE IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF PROTAGONIST

There are three parts in *Never Let Me Go*, from chapter one to chapter nine is the first part, chapter ten to chapter seventeen is the second part, the last part is from chapter eighteen to twenty-three. In the first part of the novel, Kathy lived as a girl in Hailsham. In the second part, Kathy as a closet friend with Tommy and Ruth in cottages. The last identity is Kathy as a “carer” in the hospital. This paper will choose some sentences from each part of the novel and analyze the identity construction of the protagonist.

1.1 The Identity Construction in Hailsham

Transitivity divides what people see, hear, feel and think in the real world into various processes. The first part of the novel depicted amount of psychological behaviors and processes to reveal Kathy’s attitude towards her own identity, she also told a lot of stories to remember her life in Hailsham. The following are examples of analysis:

- (1) And I’m a Hailsham student (Kazuo, I. 2006)
- (2) When I first understood, really understood, just how lucky we had been--- Tommy, Ruth and me all the rest of us (Kazuo, I. 2006).

- (3) How much you were liked and respected has to do with how good you were at “creating” (Kazuo, I. 2006).
- (4) I can see we were just at that age when we knew a few things about ourselves--- about who we were, how we different from our guardians, from the people outside--- but hadn’t yet understood what any of it meant (Kazuo, I. 2006).
- (5) We were all very special, being Hailsham students, and so it was all the more disappointing when we behave badly (Kazuo, I. 2006).

Example (1), (3) and (5) are both relational process of Kathy. In these sentence Kathy identified with her own identity and she obeyed the system of Hailsham. She never doubts that she and all her classmates are different from the world. However, she believed that her identity was fixed. In these sentences, a relationship is set up in two identities, one is Kathy herself and another is a student of Hailsham. It is useful to show that these clone students were brainwashed by Hailsham’s educational system.

Example (2) is a mental process, in this sentence Kathy pointed out the difference between the external world and the internal world of her mind.

Fig 2

Senser	Process: mental, cognition	Phenomenon
I	first understood	how lucky we had been

This sentence depicted Kathy’s good luck when she met with other people. Kathy believed that she is better than other dying clone people, because she always kept great memory of Hailsham before she died.

This sentence used “first” to emphasizes the degree of her feelings that revealed Kathy accepted her identity as a Hailsham student more firmly from her mind.

In example (4), this sentence is a behavioral process that analyzes Kathy’s little awareness of her identity. In this sentence, the circumstance is “at that

age”, that means they began to find the little differences from common people when they lived in Hailsham.

Fig 3

Behavior	Process: behavioral	Range	Circumstance
I	can see	a few things about... it meant	at that age

In this part, Kathy constructed the identity as a Hailsham student, but, she also found some unusual things between herself and her guardians (normal people). In fact, in the first part, Kathy accepted her identity of Hailsham student and she still remembered the great memories of her childhood were brought by Hailsham.

1.2 The Identity Construction in Cottages

In the second part of the novel, Kathy constructed her identity of friendship, she and her friends moved to cottages to transferred from society. In her life of cottages, she obtained memorable friendship with Tommy and Ruth. What’s more, she found some unusual things about her true identity--- the identity of clone human. By using the only participants Kathy, the

following sentences improved Kathy’s identity construction when she lived in cottages.

- (1) We are quarrelling over all kinds of little things, but at the same time we were confiding in each other more than ever (Kazuo, I. 2006).
- (2) I kept a certain distance from her, just as I did from Tommy (Kazuo, I. 2006).
- (3) Talking to Tommy wasn’t so easy anymore (Kazuo, I. 2006).
- (4) I was saying my goodbyes (Kazuo, I. 2006).
- (5) I feel warmth welling up through me (Kazuo, I. 2006).
- (6) Since each of us was copied at some point from a normal person, there must be, for each of us, somewhere out there, a model getting on with his or her life. 3

Fig 4

No.	Behavior	Process	Range	Circumstance
1	We	are quarrelling	all little things	
2	I	kept	a certain distance	as I did from Tommy
3	I	talking	Tommy	not so easy anymore

Fig 5

No.	Sayer	Process: verbal	Verbiage
4	I	saying	my goodbyes

From the above sentences, the second part of *Never Let Me Go* depicted the process of Kathy’s behavior with her friends. In the first sentence, although Kathy has some problems with Ruth, they also trust each other. With the growing misunderstanding between Kathy and Ruth, they became isolate from each other and that lead to the bad relationship with Tommy. Until the fourth sentence, Kathy left cottages and escape from her friendship with Tommy and Ruth. From sentence one to sentence four, these sentences depicted the developing process from Kathy’s life in

cottages to her leaving. It is also the process of Kathy’s identity construction when she as a friend of Tommy and Ruth.

In the following figure, this depicted Kathy’s feeling by using active sentence and mental process. This sentence showing Kathy’s emotion to Tommy, what’s more this sentence also personified the “warmth” that revealing Kathy’s inner reaction in her mind. It also shows Tommy’s importance for Kathy.

Fig 5

Senser	Process: mental, emotion	Phenomenon
I	feel	warmth welling up through me

Moreover, in the following sentence, the awareness of the true identity has troubled Kathy.

Fig 6

		Process: existential	Existent
Since	each of us	was copied	at some point

In this sentence, Kathy was awarded of the different identity from herself and society gradually. The function of this existential clause is simply to announce the situation of clone people, it is also the first step that Kathy began to reexamine her situation. In the second part, Kathy construct her identity by using her behavior and mental. The author illustrated Kathy’s feelings to her friends and carefully drawn the details of the identity process.

1.3 The Identity Construction of “Carer”

In the third part of the novel, the protagonist Kathy became a carer in society. In this part, her third identity was constructed. As a carer, Kathy met with Ruth and Tommy again, she became their carer in the last time of their lives. Kathy is a successful carer in the society. However, Kathy’s identity also disillusioned at that time.

- (1) Being a carer is suited me fine (Kazuo, I. 2006).
- (2) I became Tommy’s carer almost the year to the day after that trip to see the boat (Kazuo, I. 2006).
- (3) You are a really good carer (Kazuo, I. 2006).
- (4) Their overwhelming concern was that their own

children, their spouse, their parents, their friends did not die from cancer, motor neuron disease, heart disease (Kazuo, I. 2006).

- (5) But I’ve learn to live with it (Kazuo, I. 2006).
- (6) It seemed to me these dark byways of the country existed just for the likes of us, while the big glittering motorways with their huge signs and super cafes were for everyone else (Kazuo, I. 2006).

From the above sentences, they all chose from the third part of the novel, in this part, these sentences on behalf of the process of Kathy’s identity construction. From sentence one to sentence three, it is a relational process that revealed that Kathy was good carer in caring other clone humans, she also had chance to care about her best friends, Tommy and Ruth. As for the sentence four, with the death of Tommy and Ruth, she found the truth of her and all the clone’s identity. They were utilized as an object to help normal people away from disease and death. Sentence five is a mental process with the word “learn” that revealed Kathy was affected by strong psychological feelings.

Fig 7

Senser	Process: mental, cognition	Phenomenon
I	learn	to live with it

With the unchangeable situation, what can Kathy do is to bear with the situation. Sentence six depicted an existential process, it shows that Kathy

accepted the truth of her identity gradually and tried to live as a normal people before her death. She identified this fixed situation as an existence in the world.

Fig 8

		Process: existential	Existent
It	seemed	to me	these dark byways

From the last sentence, it is revealed that Kathy accepted her true identity eventually, but this sentence also shows a world that made those clone people marginalized. Normal people have already announced the existence of the situation that made those clone people have no right to choose their own identity. This is sentence also marked the disillusionment of Kathy’s identity.

CONCLUSION

This paper did transitivity analysis of Kathy’s identity construction in *Never Let Me Go* from functional grammar. By using the transitivity, this paper reveals the process of Kathy’s changing identity. Kathy’s identity experienced three stages, the identity of a Hailsham student, the identity of close friend and the identity of carer. All her identity also experienced from constructed to disillusionment, it is also revealed that these clone people were marginalized by normal people. Kathy and other clone people are also a human being, but it is hard for them to get a human identity, all of their organs even lives were exploited. In reality,

with the development of technology, identity construction become more and more important. This novel not only made people to consider about human society, but also embodied the important of humanity, equality and diversity of identity.

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