

Male and Female Language in the Openings of Short Stories: A Transitivity Approach¹

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Abstract

This research project examined and compared the types of transitivity processes in the openings of English short stories used by male and female writers. The opening sections of twenty English modernist short stories written by male and female writers (ten of each) were used as the data source. The transitivity system in systemic functional grammar (SFG) was utilized for the data analysis, and the intra-rater reliability was strong standing at 99.19 percent. A total of 496 occurrences of transitivity process were found in the texts of both male and female writers. All types of the processes (i.e. material, mental, and relational) were found in the works of both genders. The material process was identified as the dominant process in this study (59.68 percent), while the relational process accounted for 21.37 percent of all the processes were found. The least common type was the mental process (18.95 percent). According to the results, both males and females employed the material processes as a tool to drive the flow of short stories forward in the opening sections. However, the second-most frequently used process employed by male writers was the relational process, whereas the female writers used the mental process. Wilcoxon *U* tests showed that there were no significant differences between the number of processes used in the introduction section between male and female writers, except the mental process. A clearer and better understanding of the differences between the language of male and female writers can be achieved

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through the transitivity approach, and the differing world views of male and female writers can be understood via the actual analysis of their language use.

Keywords: transitivity, male and female language, openings of short stories, material process, mental process, relational process

Introduction

Over the past several decades, investigating the dissimilarities between male and female writers has been a source of fascination among various researchers because language is an instrument for communication, and it can also reveal how males and females view and express themselves in the world (Newman, Groom, Handelman, and Pennebaker, 2008). In fact, the differences between male and female language have been revealed in previous studies on language and gender. According to a classic study by Jespersen (1922), males' language is grammatical while females' language is emotional. In addition, Woolf (1979) emphasized the existence of the differences in the language used by both genders. She stated that sentences created by men were loose, heavy, and pompous compared to sentences produced by women. Furthermore, males use language for the instrumental purpose of conveying information, whereas women tend to use it as verbal interaction for social purposes, with verbal communication serving as an end in itself (e.g. Brownlow, Rosamon, and Parker, 2003; Colley et al., 2004; Herring, 1993).

However, some previous studies have revealed contradictory results, and have found that there were no differences in the language use of male and female writers (e.g. Azizi, 2011; Bradley, 1981; Weatherall, 2002). According to Azizi (2011), gender was not the principal factor in the differences in language use between male and female writers because even writers of same gender did not use language in identical ways. The observed differences may have been due to flaws in the previous studies, such as a small sample size or the use of different analytical frameworks. Newman et al. (2008) conducted quantitative research to analyze a huge database of 14,000 texts from 70 studies via

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC); the results revealed that women used more words related to social and psychological processes, while men had a preference for using words related to the topics of property and impersonal items. Along the same lines, Thomas-Tate et al. (2017) suggested that there was a gender bias in electronic communication that affected the degree of politeness, directness, and formality. These two studies, in particular the work of Newman et al. (2008), shed some light on the differences between male and female language use; however, they mainly examined the frequency of words that were related to social and psychological processes, and did not analyze the processes that were actually used in the text. The differences between male and female writers' language use can be more clearly understood via a detailed analysis of the processes of language use, such as transitivity processes.

Using the transitivity theory, a model taken from "systemic functional grammar (SFG)" as the analytical framework could produce extremely interesting results regarding differences in the language used by each gender. Akrom (2012) applied the theory to examine the transitivity processes in 26 paragraphs of news taken from National Geographic websites. According to the results of the study, the dominant process found on the National Geographic news websites was the material process. Similarly, Marbun (2016) analyzed the types of processes in the transitivity systems in five articles taken from National Geographic magazine, and the results also suggested that the dominant process was the material process. Al-Qader (2020) applied Halliday's 1985 transitivity theory to analyze the types of processes used in a narrative novel entitled *Foe* that was written by John Maxwell Coetzee (1986); similar to the previous studies by Marbun (2016), Al-Qader (2020) found that the most frequently used process was the material process. Rahayu and Efransyah (2020) also used Halliday's 1985 transitivity theory to analyze tenth-grade students' five recount texts²; the results were similar to previous transitivity research studies,

² "Recount" is the text telling the reader what happened. It retells a past event. It begins by telling the reader who was involved, what happened, where this event took place and when it happened (Pardiyono, 2007: 63).

as the material process was found to be dominant. Even though these four studies had interesting findings concerning the processes used in writing, they did not compare the use of processes between male and female writers writing short stories, which is a genre that has not been examined. As transitivity is included as the ideational function of language, using this approach to analyze literary works can demonstrate what occurs in the text to understand the relation between words in each clause.

In addition, the results of the previous studies on transitivity processes showed how language was used at the functional grammar and semantic levels. The results clearly showed how people viewed the world, as well as their reactions to and experiences of it. It would be interesting to see whether male and female writers use transitivity processes similarly or differently in their writing of introductions by analyzing the language used by male and female writers at the phrase and sentence levels in modernist short stories.

Similar to a novel, a short story has a plot, resonance, and other dynamic components, albeit to a lesser degree. A short story often contains about 1,000 to 4,000 words. The main elements of a short story include the exposition (the introduction of the setting, the situation, and the main characters), the complication (the event that leads to the conflict), the crisis (the protagonist's decisive moment that leads to a course of action), the climax (the highest point of interest), and the resolution (the point at which the conflict is resolved). The exposition or the introduction is considered to be a vital part of a short story because, without the exposition, the reader will not have a complete understanding of the characters or the story, or background information about the important characters. It is the first part of the short story; when it is omitted, no complete appreciation of the story can be made.

Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine the differences between males' and females' language use by adopting the transitivity process (Simpson, 1993; Burton, 1982). In order to expand the knowledge in this area of research further, this study will focus solely on the language used by male and female writers in the opening of modernist short stories.

Literature Review

According to Halliday (1994), transitivity is a system that construes the world of experience as a manageable set of process types. The transitivity process types are what individuals express; as Berry (1975: 149) explained, "When we speak or write about anything, usually what we are speaking or writing about will include some kind of process." The system of transitivity indicates processes connected to circumstances and participants. The form of verb phrases is presented as the transitivity processes. A set of participants, which are noun phrases, is needed as the processes are performed while the circumstances are presented as adverbs or prepositional phrases. Halliday (1971: 117) illustrated the relationship between the transitivity system and clauses as "the set of options whereby the speaker encodes his experience of the processes of the external world, and of the internal world of his own consciousness, together with the participants in these processes and their attendant circumstances." Simpson (1993) stated that the transitivity model depicted who (or what) does what to whom (or what).

There are six types of processes in the transitivity system, three of which, namely the material, the mental, and the relational, are considered to be the main processes. The behavioral, verbal, and existential processes are located at the boundaries of the three main process types, and are considered to be the three minor types of processes.

The present study examined the types of transitivity processes in the openings of English short stories using the three main process types proposed by Halliday (1994: 107); according to Halliday, "Material, mental, and relational are the three main types of process in the English transitivity system." Nevertheless, Halliday's classification of process types has been adjusted and used by many researchers. For example, Montgomery (1986), Nguyen (2012), and Simpson (1933) used the transitivity system as a stylistic instrument in literary linguistic and journalism studies. Consequently, the present study is based on Burton's and Simpson's (1993) transitivity models because these models emphasize literary linguistics.

Halliday (1994) suggested that three elements contributed to the material process, namely the process itself, the participants in the process, and the circumstances related to the process. The participants engaging in the material process are classified as “actors” and “goals.” The actor is the essential element functioning as the “doer” in this process, whereas the goal is quite different. The goal is a non-compulsory element because it depends on whether or not the verb in each clause takes an object. The circumstances provide additional information about the how, why, where, and when of the process occurring in a clause. According to Simpson (1993), material processes can be subdivided into three minor types. First, when the doer or the actor enacts the process intentionally, the process is defined as material action intention. Second, when the process is executed unintentionally by the doer or the actor, it is considered to be a material action supervision process. Third, when the process is performed by an inanimate actor, it is defined as a material event process.

In contrast to the material process, which is the process of doing, the mental process is defined as the process of sensing. The methods of expressing this process are thinking and feeling, in which what takes place inside one’s mind is key. The participants in the mental process are the “senser” and the “phenomenon.” Mental processes can be subcategorized as the verbalized process and the internalized process; the internalized process also be subcategorized into three types, which are perception, reaction, and cognition, with the association of a “senser” and a “phenomenon” as the participants. The processes of “seeing” and “hearing” define the mental internalized perception process. The mental internalized reaction process can be understood as the process of “liking” and “hating,” while the mental internalized cognition process is the process of “thinking” and “understanding.” The mental verbalized process can be identified as the process of “saying”; unlike the internalized process, this process has different participants, which are 1) a “sayer” (the individual who is speaking), 2) a “target” (the addressee to whom the process is directed, and 3) “verbiage” (what is said).

The relational process can entail awareness of the process of “being,” and two participants are always required when this process is enacted. Not only can the presence of the verb “be” in a clause represent

the relational process, but other verbs that embody the state of being, possessing, and becoming can also be enlisted in this process. Halliday (1994) suggested that the three types of relational process in the English transitivity system were intensive, circumstantial, and possessive; moreover, they could be subdivided into attributive and identifying modes. A process is considered to be attributive when the participants are labeled the “carrier” and the “attribute.” The carrier stands for the topic of the clause, while the attribute signifies a description of or a comment about the topic. When considered as an identifying process, the participants consist of the “token” and the “value.” The token is marked when the identifying process allows passivization; in the active form, the subject is always the “token” and the complement is the “value.”

Research Methodology

This study adopted both descriptive and qualitative methods to seek answers to the research question: What are the differences between male and female writers’ language use in the openings of modernist short stories in terms of processes based on the theory of the transitivity process?

Sources for the Data

The source data for the study were twenty opening sections taken from modernist English short stories. The scope of the opening section of this study was intended to cover the exposition of short stories in which the introduction of the setting, the situation, and the main characters were presented. The twenty short stories were selected for the present study based on the following criteria:

- 1) The short stories were written by both male and female writers,
- 2) the stories were published from the 1880s to the 1940s and can be included in the literary movement of modernism during this period, which expressed the themes about life in the World War I period, reflecting changing gender roles: women had to assume the responsibility

of men at home while men joined the military, and
3) they were written by native English-speaking writers.

Table 1 Selected modernist short stories

Male writers	Female writers
1. Love among the Haystacks, D. H. Lawrence (1912)	1. The Legacy, Virginia Woolf (1944)
2. Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad (1899)	2. The Garden Party, Katherine Mansfield (1923)
3. The Secret Sharer, Joseph Conrad (1909)	3. The Mark on the Wall, Virginia Woolf (1917)
4. Odour of Chrysanthemums, D. H. Lawrence (1911)	4. Prelude, Katherine Mansfield (1918)
5. A Rose for Emily, William Faulkner (1930)	5. The Fulness of Life, Edith Wharton (1893)
6. An Awakening, Sherwood Anderson (1919)	6. A Journey, Edith Wharton (1889)
7. Death in The Wood, Sherwood Anderson (1933)	7. A Telephone Call, Dorothy Parker (1930)
8. The Dead, James Joyce (1914)	8. Mother Catherine, Zora Neale Hurston (1929)
9. The Sisters, James Joyce (1914)	9. Big Blonde, Dorothy Parker (1929)
10. That Evening Sun, William Faulkner (1931)	10. The Sweat, Zora Neale Hurston (1926)

Pilot Study

Prior to the main analysis, a pilot study was conducted to select the most appropriate descriptive framework for the research. In the pilot study, two approaches that have often been used in previous studies (i.e. theme and rheme, and transitivity) were compared. The first, the thematic framework (theme and rheme), was based on Halliday's 1985 framework focusing on the analysis of texts within the mode of textual metafunction in a series of theme and rheme structures. The second was the transitivity model proposed by Burton (1982), which focuses on the text in three steps. The first step was to abstract the actors and the processes, the second was to discuss the text according to the types of processes involved, and the third was to identify who or what was affected by each process. According to the results of the pilot study, the thematic framework did not deliver as much descriptive information about the texts as did the transitivity framework. The information supplied by the three-step model in the transitivity framework regarding the actors, the processes, and what was affected was essential for the analysis of male and female language. Thus, the transitivity models suggested by Burton (1982) and Simpson (1993) were selected as the main method of analysis in this study.

Research Tool

The research tool in this study was a coding scheme, which was created following Burton's 1982 transitivity process; as shown in Table 2, there are three types of processes. The first type, the material process, was subcategorized as follows:

- 1) MaAIP: the material action intention process,
- 2) MaSP: the material action supervision process, and
- 3) MaEP: the material event process.

The second type of process was the mental process, which was subdivided as follows:

- 1) MeVP: the mental verbalized process,
- 2) MeIPP: the mental internalized perception process,
- 3) MeIRP: the mental internalized reaction process, and
- 4) MeICP: the mental internalized cognition process.

The third type, the relational process, was abbreviated as RP.

To examine the validity of the research instrument, the coding scheme was checked by an expert.

Table 2 Coding scheme

Code	Description	Examples	
MaAIP	Material - action - intention process	- she ACTOR	swallowed PROCESS: MaAIP
MaSP	Material - action - supervision process	- Lottie and Kezia ACTOR	wobbled PROCESS: MaSP
MaEP	Material - event process	- leaves ACTOR	fell PROCESS: MaEP
MeVP	Mental - verbalized process	- Gilbert Clandon ACTOR (sayer)	had asked PROCESS: MeVP
MeIPP	Mental - internalized - perception process	- woman ACTOR (senser)	watched PROCESS: MeIPP
MeIRP	Mental - internalized - reaction process	- her husband ACTOR (senser)	wanted PROCESS: MeIRP
MeICP	Mental - internalized - cognition process	- no one ACTOR (senser)	knows PROCESS: MeICP
RP	Relational process	- daisy plants ACTOR (senser)	had seemed PROCESS: RP

Data Collection

To collect the data, all twenty introductions were coded using the coding scheme that was developed. Prior to embarking on the first step in the analysis, the introduction section of each short story was segmented into clauses by tagging them with a number (1, 2, 3...) and a letter (a, b, c...) to be able to identify them during the analysis. After all the clauses had been labeled with numbers and letters, the doer or the participant in each clause was identified. In the next step, the process in each clause was identified using the coding scheme. Finally, who or what was affected by each of these processes was determined in the third step. Intra-rater reliability was conducted to check the reliability of the identification of the process types; the first author re-coded eight of the twenty texts (40 percent) using the coding scheme two months after the first round of coding (Mackey and Gass, 2016), and the reliability was very strong, standing at 99.19 percent.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Once the types of processes had been identified, they were ranked according to frequency. To compare the difference between the number of processes used by each gender, The Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted because of a small sample size corpus.

Results

Based on the data analysis, 496 occurrences of transitivity process types were found, including material, mental, and relational processes (see Table 3). The most frequently used process type was material, which was used 296 out of 496 times (59.68 percent). The mental process was found to be the rarest process type in this study, as it was used 94 times in total (18.95 percent), while the relational process was used 106 times in 496 occurrences (21.37 percent).

Table 3 Process types produced in the opening sections of 20 modernist short stories

Process type	Number	Percentage
Material	296	59.68
Material - action - intention	171	34.48
Material - action - supervision	12	2.42
Material - event	113	22.78
Mental	94	18.95
Mental - verbalized	19	3.83
Mental - internalized - perception	37	7.46
Mental - internalized - reaction	11	2.22
Mental - internalized - cognition	27	5.44
Relational	106	21.37
Relational	106	21.37
Total	496	100

Both the material and the mental processes could be subcategorized. As shown in Table 3 above, the material process was subcategorized into material action intention processes (171 occurrences), material action supervision (12 occurrences), and material event processes (113 occurrences), while the mental processes were subcategorized as mental verbalized (19 occurrences), mental internalized perception (37 occurrences), mental internalized reaction (11 occurrences), and mental internalized cognition processes (27 occurrences). There were 106 occurrences of the relational process.

Material processes were found to be the dominant process employed by both male and female writers (see Table 4). For males, they accounted for 64.78 percent of all the processes they produced, while the females' use accounted for 55.26 percent. According to the findings, the relational process was the second-most frequently employed process by male writers (21.30 percent) while the mental process was marked as the second most frequently used process by female writers (23.31 percent). Finally, male writers used mental processes the least (13 percent), while female writers used the relational process (21.43 percent) least often.

Table 4 Process types found in the opening sections of modernist short stories by male and female writers

Male			Female		
Process type	No.	Percentage	Process type	No.	Percentage
Material	149	64.78	Material	147	55.26
Material - action - intention	74	32.17	Material - action - intention	97	36.47
Material - action - supervision	5	2.17	Material - action - supervision	7	2.63
Material - event	70	30.43	Material - event	43	16.17
Mental	32	13.91	Mental	62	23.31
Mental - verbalized	9	3.91	Mental - verbalized	10	3.76
Mental - internalized - perception	12	5.22	Mental - internalized - perception	25	9.4
Mental - internalized - reaction	4	1.74	Mental - internalized - reaction	7	2.63
Mental - internalized - cognition	7	3.04	Mental - internalized - cognition	20	7.52
Relational	49	21.30	Relational	57	21.43
Relational	49	21.30	Relational	57	21.43
Total	230	100	Total	266	100

The following section illustrates the processes used by male and female writers in their short story openings. There are two examples presented for each type of process by both male and female writers.

Table 5 Material action intention process used by male and female writers

Material action intention process used by male writers		
He	stepped	into a closet
	Process: MaAIP	
I	turned	my head to take a parting glance
	Process: MaAIP	
Material action intention process used by female writers		
I	was smoking	a cigarette
	Process: MaAIP	
She	had swallowed	Her last draught of medicine
	Process: MaAIP	

The above sentences are categorized under the material action intention process, as the verbs, “*stepped*,” “*turned*,” “*was smoking*,” and “*had swallowed*” indicate active behavior or using physical action intentionally.

Table 6 Material action supervision process used by male and female writers

Material action supervision process used by male writers		
He	lost	his power over her
	Process: MaSP	
I	had found	it
	Process: MaSP	
Material action supervision process used by female writers		
They	wobbled	
	Process: MaSP	
She	sinking	more and more deeply
	Process: MaSP	

The above sentences are categorized under the material supervision, as the verbs “*lost*,” “*had found*,” “*wobbled*,” and “*sinking*” indicate an involuntary behavior or using physical action unintentionally.

Table 7 Material event process used by male and female writers

Material event process used by male writers		
Hedge	flung	its black shadow
	Process: MaEP	
A haze	rested	on the low shores
	Process: MaEP	
Material event process used by female writers		
A half-dozen flags	fly	bravely from eminences
	Process: MaEP	
A great hamper in the bedroom	held	the clothes
	Process: MaEP	

The above sentences are under the material event process type, as the verbs “*flung*,” “*rested*,” “*fly*,” and “*held*” indicate an action performed by an inanimate actor.

Table 8 Mental verbalized process used by male and female writers

Mental verbalized process used by male writers		
She	asks	for some dog-meat
	Process: MeVP	
Old Cotter	said	
	Process: MeVP	
Mental verbalized process used by female writers		
He	had asked	her to come
	Process: MeVP	
I	(won't) ask	anything else of you
	Process: MeVP	

The above sentences are categorized under the mental verbalized process, as the verbs “*asks*,” “*said*,” “*had asked*,” and “*(won't) ask*” indicate that the subjects are sensing something and speaking, or voicing it aloud.

Table 9 Mental internalized perception process used by male and female writers

Mental internalized perception process used by male writers		
The woman	sees	the inside of her house
	Process: MeIPP	
We four	watched	his back
	Process: MeIPP	
Mental internalized perception process used by female writers		
I	saw	the mark on the wall
	Process: MeIPP	
She	felt	herself
	Process: MeIPP	

The above sentences are categorized under the mental internalized perception process, as the verbs “*see*,” “*watched*,” “*saw*,” and “*felt*” indicate sensing something by seeing or feeling.

Table 10 Mental internalized reaction process used by male and female writers

Mental internalized reaction process used by male writers		
Anyone who	wanted	to carry
	Process: MeIRP	
I	have hated	the thought of it ever since
	Process: MeIRP	
Mental internalized reaction process used by female writers		
She	loved	their neckties
	Process: MeIRP	
Men	like	her
	Process: MeIRP	

The above sentences incorporate a mental internalized reaction process, as the verbs “*wanted*,” “*have hated*,” “*love*,” and “*like*” indicate sensing something in terms of love or hate.

Table 11 Mental internalized cognition process used by male and female writers

Mental internalized cognition process used by male writers		
Miss Kate and Miss Julia	had thought	of it
	Process: MeICP	
Everybody who	knew	them
	Process: MeICP	
Mental internalized cognition process used by female writers		
Christina	had remembered	even Tracy Giggs
	Process: MeICP	
I	think	of the fire
	Process: MeICP	

The above sentences represent a mental internalized cognition process, as the verbs “*had thought*,” “*knew*,” “*had remembered*,” and “*think*” indicate sensing something in terms of conceiving or knowing it.

Table 12 Relational process used by male and female writers

Relational process used by male writers		
The air	was	dark above Gravesend
	Process: RP	
It	was	of great size
	Process: RP	
Relational process used by female writers		
They	were	at an end
	Process: RP	
Lamps	are	upon the main altar
	Process: RP	

The above sentences are categorized under the relational process, as the verbs “*was*,” “*were*” and “*are*” indicate a state of being.

Table 13 shows that the total number of all processes used by male writers ($Mdn = 22.50$) and female ($Mdn = 28.00$) was not significantly different, indicated by a non-significant Mann-Whitney U test, $U(\text{female} = 20, \text{male} = 20) = 29.50, z = -1.55, p(.121) < .05$. Also, the number of each process type used by male and female writers was not significantly different statistically according to the non-significant Mann-Whitney U tests, except the mental process. As can be seen in Table 13, female writers’ use of the mental process ($Mdn = 5.5$) was higher than that of male writers ($Mdn = 2.00$). A Mann-Whitney U test indicated that this difference was statistically significant, $U(\text{female} = 20, \text{male} = 20) = 29.50, z = -1.553, p < .05$. That means, overall male and female writers used a similar number of material and relational processes when writing short stories introduction. However, female writers preferred employing more mental processes: mental verbalized, mental internalized perception, mental internalized reaction and mental internalized cognition processes, when compared to male writers (see Table 4).

Table 13 Comparison between the number of processes used by male and female writers

	Material Process	Mental Process	Relational Process	All Processes
Mann-Whitney U	49.00	24.00	42.00	29.50
Z	-.08	-1.98	-.63	-1.55
p	.939	.047*	.530	.121

* $p < .05$

Discussion

The results of the study revealed 496 occurrences of transitivity processes. The dominant process used by male and female writers was the material process; there were 296 cases of the material process, which indicated that this process accounted for more than half of all the processes identified (59.68 percent). The relational process was the

second most frequently used (21.37 percent), while the least used was the mental process (18.95 percent). Also, female writers were found to use more mental processes than male writers.

According to the findings of this study, the material process was the dominant one used by both males and females, which supports the claims of numerous researchers (Akrom, 2012; Al-Qader, 2020; Marbun, 2016; Rahayu and Efransyah, 2020). Applying the transitivity system to reveal the differences in language use by males and females can shed light on the dissimilarities in the ways in which these two genders represent the real world. Consequently, the abundant use of the material process in the openings of modernist short stories suggests that both genders apply the material process to trigger actions, as this process is defined as the process of doing and happening. Furthermore, using the material process can also describe the way of expressing the experiential function of language by focusing on physical action in the outside world. It can also indicate that male and female writers use this process to facilitate the flow of modernist short stories. As mentioned previously, the general structure of a short story consists of the exposition, the complication, the rising action, the crisis, the climax, and the resolution; thus, this process can be used to allow the short story to progress and move ahead. Consequently, it can be seen that males and females use the material process as an instrument to drive their stories forward.

“When he went to the bank in the morning he stepped into a closet and put on a black alpaca coat...” (Anderson, 1999).

The verbs “*went*,” “*stepped*,” and “*put on*” from the above sentence are classified as MaAIP. Using this type of process helps to advance the progress of the short story from an action to another.

As the findings of this study have shown, the relational process was the second most frequently used process by male writers. This supports the claims of Akrom (2012) and Marbun (2016). The relational process addresses “being,” considering that this process has attributive and identifying modes. It can be used to describe the details of the settings, the points of view, the plot, the characterization, and the themes

in short stories. When male writers use this process in the opening of modernist short stories, it indicates that they are likely to start their short stories by describing and showing the relationships among the aspects involved in their stories. For example, the settings can be depicted by employing the relational process in order to describe the time and place in which things occur. Thus, males use the relational process as a tool to illustrate and link things in the openings of modernist short stories.

However, female writers are more likely to use the mental process as the second most-frequently used process; hence, the results of the previous studies by Al-Qader (2020) and by Radayu (2020) are in line with the findings of this study. As the mental process is defined as the process of sensing, it describes what transpires inside the mind. The mental process can be subdivided into three types, which are perception, reaction, and cognition. By using the mental process, female writers express their feelings, reactions, and cognitions through their short stories by drawing attention to emotionally-oriented beings.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, male and female writers use material processes as a tool to advance their stories from one stage to another. The results also indicated that, while male writers used the relational process as a tool for illustrating and relating things in the openings of short stories, female writers accentuated emotionally-oriented beings by showing their feelings, reactions, and cognitions in the short stories via mental processes. Furthermore, male and female writers were similar in terms of the openings of their stories by showing the relationship of one character to others. The results of this study are remarkable because this is the first study to use the transitivity approach to analyze the differences in language use between male and female writers in the opening sections of short stories. The findings of the research have some implications for readers and writers to further recognize the different styles of male and female writers in the openings of short stories.

These findings, however, should be approached with caution since it was a small-scale study that focused on only one genre, namely modernist short stories; thus, it would be interesting to expand the research scope to cover other genres of short stories or even other types of prose. Since the focus in this study was on the introductions in short stories, analyzing other parts of short stories could provide a better understanding of all the processes used in this type of prose. Moreover, adding the other three processes (that is, the behavioral, verbal, and existential processes) to the study in addition to the three main processes—material, mental, and relational—could provide new or diverse perspectives on the differences between male and female writers' language use.

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