

## **Role of Languages in Modern Narrative and Characterization: Stylistic Comparison of Transitivity between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *[I] Am Probably Lost***

Afsaneh Rezaie,<sup>1</sup> Neda Daliri Beyrak Olia,<sup>2</sup> Mahdi Dastfan<sup>3</sup>

1- Faculty of Humanities, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran

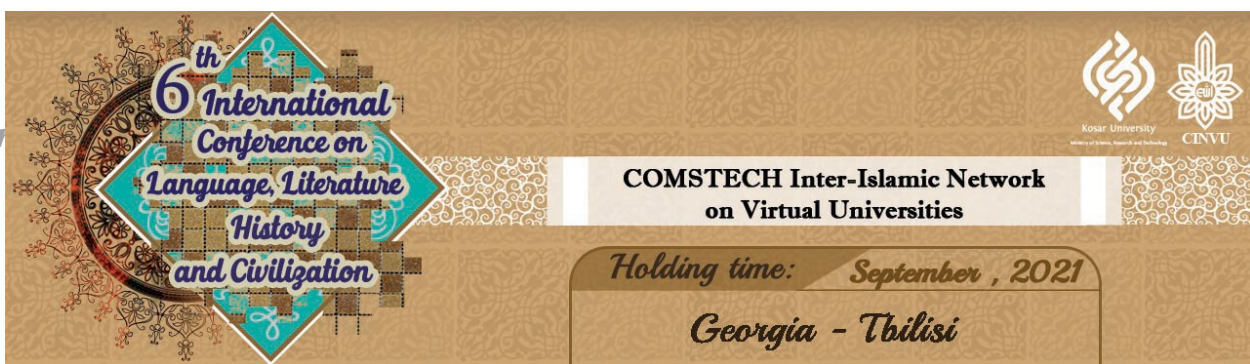
2- Faculty of Humanities, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran

3- Imam Reza International University, Mashhad, Iran

### **Abstract**

Comparative literature has long been concerned with studying similarities and differences in the literature of various cultures and languages. Its approach, like other approaches to literary criticism, is mostly focused on the non-linguistic aspects of the works compared. The present paper has tried to adopt a linguistic and stylistic analytical framework for the comparison of two modern novels from two languages: Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Salar's *[I] Am Probably Lost*. By referring to Halliday's model of transitivity, this research has analyzed and contrasted the two writers' stylistic choices of transitivity in the transitivity profiles of the heroines in English and Persian, respectively. In the examined excerpts, results showed that Salar had used 24.8% agentive material processes while Woolf's narrative included 10.9% such processes. Mental processes ranked first in Woolf's narrative with 3% more abundance compared to material processes whereas Salar had used mental processes +10% less than material processes. These results and the abundance percentage of other verbal processes were then interpreted based on Halliday's arguments about the effects of process abundance on character interpretation, and it was concluded that Mrs. Dalloway's transitivity profile was more apt for the expression of modern experience.

**Keywords:** Stylistics, transitivity, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *[I] Am Probably Lost*, modern fiction, narrative, characterization



## Introduction

Comparative stylistics can be a useful tool to explore the variances of style in literatures of different languages. However, it remains a challenging task to compare literary styles in works written in different languages for various reasons including the English-centered field of stylistics which is yet to be researched in non-English languages and the different nature of each distinct language. This study is an attempt to compare and contrast the style of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* [1] written in English and Sara Salar's [1] *Am Probably Lost* [2] written in Persian through examination of transitivity in their narration. Modern narrative is known for its experimental use of language [3] which showcases the importance of stylistic analyses for examining its linguistic complexities. Modernist fiction has emerged as a reaction to the realist school, contrasting it in many ways including narrative technique, character portrayal, self-referentiality and plot linearity [3]. In modern fiction, "syntax echoes context" [3]; the context of modern individual trapped in a modern understanding of existence. For this reason, the following comparative analysis of style not only demonstrates stylistic differences between English and Persian but also emphasizes its relation to how successful each language can be used as a tool for expressing the modern sensation.

Many studies have examined Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and its modernist style, most of which concern non-linguistic features such as narrative and characterization [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9]. On the other hand, the literature on Salar's [1] *Am Probably Lost* is rare. Sara Salar's novel is the one day story of the narrator who struggles with being a wife and a mother in the metropolitan city of Tehran. While reporting the details of her present day, she also narrates pieces of her past life as a rather shy girl in a small city as well as her memories with Gandom, her best friend of those old days. Its narrative and linguistic pattern is similar, in many ways, to Woolf's story of Mrs. Dalloway whose past and present are narrated in the form of stream of consciousness. The present paper aims to present the linguistic and stylistic features of *Mrs. Dalloway* and [1] *Am Probably Lost* with regard to their use of transitivity in certain selected excerpts. Halliday's model of transitivity will help to show the role of linguistic features in expressing the modern experience in two distinct languages, at the same time, will complement the literature on the main characters of these two novels [10].

## Elements of Localization: One Story, Different Settings

Comparison can only yield reliable results if controlled variables are accounted for so that the relationship between the dependent variables can be better judged. In this study, patterns of transitivity in English and Persian are to be examined and compared; therefore, it was necessary to select texts which share enough elements, with regard to plot and characters, to enable a reliable comparison based on the stylistic model of transitivity. The English novel of *Mrs. Dalloway* and the Persian novel of [1] *Am Probably Lost* contain many similarities which are fully discussed in this section. The close resemblance between the two heroines makes it possible to compare their transitivity profiles, and examine how two different languages regulate unique patterns of transitivity and subsequently agency in fiction. The following is a discussion of similarities with regard to characterization, plot and stylistic features.

### *Similarities in Characterization and Plot*

Perhaps, the most salient shared narrative feature between Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Salar's [1] *Am Probably Lost* is that they are both circadian novels, that is, the entire course of action takes place in one single day. Whereas *Mrs. Dalloway* is the depiction of 1920s London, [1] *Am Probably Lost* takes place in contemporary Tehran. Both of these novels are focused on an upper-class housewife's struggles to make sense of the experience of life as both a woman and a modern individual. Although the actual plots revolve around their routines in the present-day, readers are also taken back to their past lives through memories and technique of analepsis as single girls living in small towns who eventually end up marrying wealthy and successful men and migrate to the capital.

The significant number of similarities and parallels in characterization make the drawn analogy well-grounded. Both Clarissa and the narrator of [1] *Am Probably Lost* are upper-class housewives and mothers who have spent their youth in a small town. They are both conservative women who make safe decisions especially when it comes to marriage; by marrying wealthy and successful men, they migrate to the capital



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and win a prosperous life. Other than this, the two characters prefer a certain married lifestyle in which they long to have some kind of privacy and not share every story or feeling with their husbands. In [I] *Am Probably Lost*, the narrator lacks love and respect for her husband but she doesn't say anything to him (the following is the translated version of the excerpt by authors with numbered lines):

(1) *When he is leaving the message, [I] reply. (2) [He] asks: "How are you?" (3) How much [I] wish [I] could say "None of your business." (4) [I] say: "[I] am fine." (5) [He] asks: "How is Samyar?" (5) Again, [I] wish [I] could say "None of your business."* [2]

As for Clarissa, her need for privacy is to the extent that she sleeps in a separate room: we read "for the House sat so long that Richard insisted, after her illness, that she must sleep undisturbed. And really she preferred to read of the retreat from Moscow" [1].

Both of these women are protected by their patriarchal husbands who feel the need to help their wives, especially in circumstances traditionally defined as difficult to be handled by women such as car accidents. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, when Clarissa's husband Richard is coming back from Lady Bruton's, having bought flowers for Clarissa, he thinks to himself:

(1) *He had come up once upon a time, been jealous of Peter Walsh; jealous of him and Clarissa. (2) But she had often said to him that she had been right not to marry Peter Walsh; which, knowing Clarissa, was obviously true; she wanted support. (3) Not that she was weak; but she wanted support.* [1]

In [I] *Am Probably Lost*, the protagonist's husband Keyvan reacts in a similarly protective manner when he finds out that she has gotten into a car accident:

(1) *[He] says [he] will call Mansour now to come to me. (2) [I] say, [I] don't think it is necessary for someone to come. (3) [He] says no. [He] will definitely call Mansour to come so that he is relieved there.* [2]

The two heroines also share certain personality traits one of which is low self-esteem and a feeling of inferiority which sometimes leads to jealousy. In many instances throughout the story, we can notice that both Clarissa and the narrator of [I] *Am Probably Lost* compare themselves with other characters of the novel and experience such feelings. For example, in the following excerpt Clarissa wishes to be like lady Bexborough:

(1) *She would have been, like Lady Bexborough, slow and stately; rather large; interested in politics like a man; with a country house; very dignified, very sincere.* [1]

In another moment of self-reflection, Clarissa reaches the conclusion that she lives to impress others, and not for her own enjoyment and benefit, which can be a manifestation of low self-esteem. While thinking so, she then even wishes to be like her husband:

(1) *Much rather would she have been one of those people like Richard who did things for themselves, whereas ... she did things not simply, not for themselves; but to make people think this or that.* [1]

On the other side, we can see in many cases in the course of story that the narrator of [I] *Am Probably Lost* feels inferior to and jealous of her friend Gandom. She is constantly humiliated by Gandom's appearance, her popularity and her courage:

*[I] don't know why as soon as everybody saw Gandom, [they] were enchanted to the extent that made one crazy.* [2]

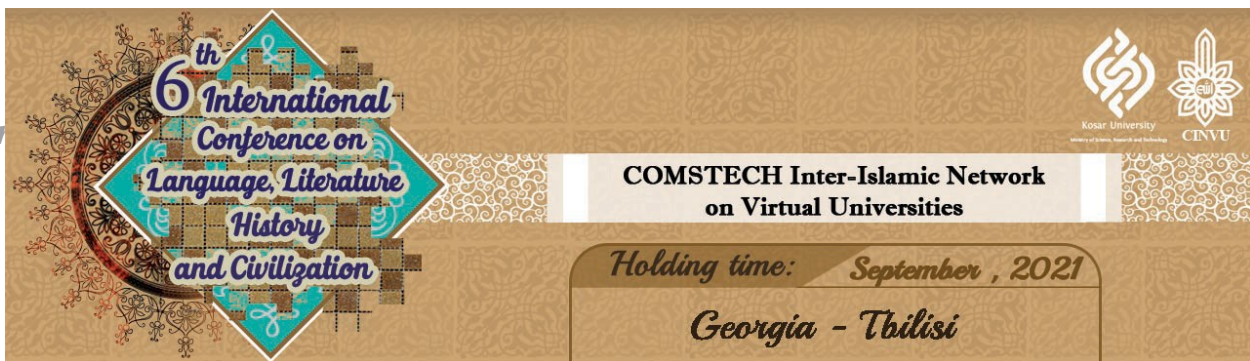
*[I] was always mortified in front of Gandom, when [she] turned a blind eye on my fears and when [she] didn't.* [2]

*Gandom gets dimples when [she] smiles. [I] get mad from her smiles ...* [2]

*Could [it] be not important? Even if [I] was supposed to live there for one more moment, [I] cared what people around me thought about me. People [I] didn't even know ...* [2]

Gandom is brave enough to do whatever she wants in a society where one cannot easily be what they wish to whereas the narrator does not have the confidence to speak her mind and be anything near what she wants to be. This is perhaps the reason why she doesn't possess a name in the story indicating her lack of confidence to BE who she is.





Furthermore, in both novels, Clarissa and the narrator have a non-conformist close friend (Sally and Gandom) with whom they had spent their youth while having lost touch with them presently. These friends of theirs are both nontraditional and free-spirited, and constantly deviate from the conventional beliefs, ethics and norms shared by the majority of people in society.

Apart from being a housewife, these two main characters are also mothers. The only difference which can be stated here is that Clarissa is the mother of a teenage girl named Elizabeth whereas the narrator of [I] *Am Probably Lost* is a mother of a preschool boy. These two mothers are both non-traditional in the sense that they don't act as socially defined "good mothers" who provide the basic needs of their children and satisfy for their sake. Although they are housewives, unlike traditional mothers, they do not spend their time in the house doing chores, and they do not spend much time for the proper upbringing of their children. The following is an example of such non-traditional behaviour from [I] *Am Probably Lost*:

*"Sometimes [I] scream at him every few days, sometimes every day and maybe twice or three times in a day."* [2]

While in another excerpt, the heroine talks to herself:

*[You] do know that you have never been a mother as you should have been, [you] know that [you] have always wished not to have had a child.* [2]

In [I] *Am Probably Lost*, the main character suffers from a mental illness which stems from confusion and uncertainty in her life. We may state that the parallel character for her in this case would be Septimus Warren Smith, who is severely suffering from a mental illness. Related to this matter, both stories depict an evil psychologist character who is unqualified for the treatment of [I] *Am Probably Lost*'s narrator or Septimus hinting at both writers' disbelief in the practice of psychology.

Four motifs are shared: death, homosexuality, war, and city life. The first shared motif by these two stories is death. As we can see in many cases throughout the story, Clarissa and other characters are reminded of death by different things and incidents. Even in the midst of preparation for a seemingly frivolous party, death is a constant undercurrent to the characters' thoughts and actions. Septimus commits suicide, Peter Walsh fears growing old and dying, and Clarissa, even when she is trying to enjoy life, is preoccupied with death and repeatedly quotes from Shakespeare's play *Cymbeline* a passage about the comfort of death ("Fear no more the heat o' the sun / Nor the furious winter's rages") [11]. The following is one example of characters' preoccupation with death in *Mrs. Dalloway*:

*Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely?* [1]

This is also the case in [I] *Am Probably Lost* as the main character is reminded of death a number of times especially when facing the city bridges:

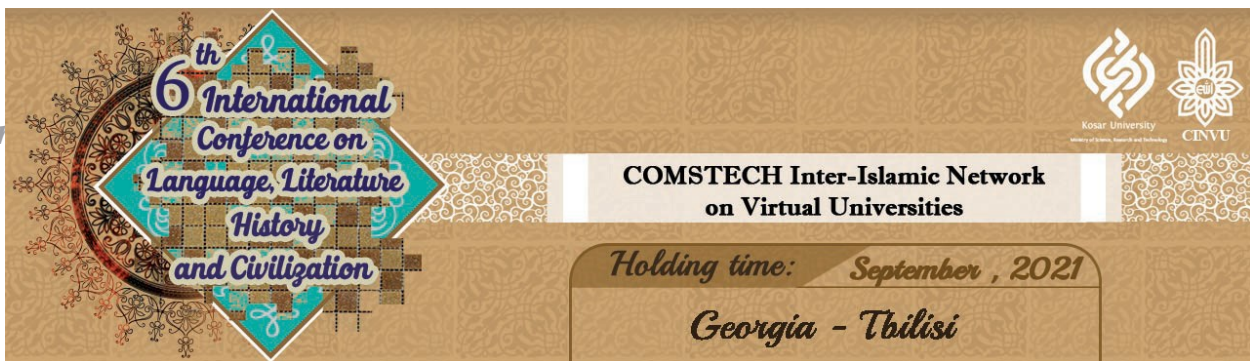
*[I] look at the iron straps under the bridge, at those concretes and other stuff, and again this thought that if an earthquake hits now this bridge definitely ... [it] comes to my mind that [it] is not just the bridge, there are also lots of cars on it. [I] pray unconsciously ...* [2]

The other motif which is probably shared between these novels is homosexuality. This motif can be easily spotted in *Mrs. Dalloway* as Clarissa looks back at the past and her relationship with Sally and considers the moment when Sally kissed her on the lip as "the most exquisite moment of her whole life" [1]. This passage and a number of other occurrences ("Take Sally Seton; her relation in the old days with Sally Seton. Had not that, after all, been love?" [1]) show that this motif undoubtedly exists in *Mrs. Dalloway*; however, the attribution of this motif to [I] *Am Probably Lost* is not as easy. Due to the fact that homosexuality is not openly accepted in Iranian culture and is considered as taboo, one cannot approach this case clearly and say this motif exists in the story; however, there are some, though not so obvious, instances which can lead to this deduction:

*Gandom pulls up her blouse ...* [2]

*[I] must, by any means, find this trash selfish bastard girl, [I] must, by any means, put my hand in hers once more and feel its heat ...* [2]

The motif of war is a third common feature between the novels. The writers mention World War I and the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war in *Mrs. Dalloway* and [I] *Am Probably Lost* respectively. The inclusion of the



concept of war can be interpreted as partly symbolizing the main character's and also other characters' internal conflict. Last but not least, the concept of city life is constantly mentioned in the stories. In many cases in both novels, we can perceive the hustle and bustle of modern city life, the shared setting of modern fiction, some of whose features are consumption and extravagance; characters are also shown to be in a loss of faith and cultural exhaustion which are the manifestations of modern philosophy [3]. This feeling of being lost as modern individuals is directly expressed in the title of Salar's novel.

### *Stylistic Imitation*

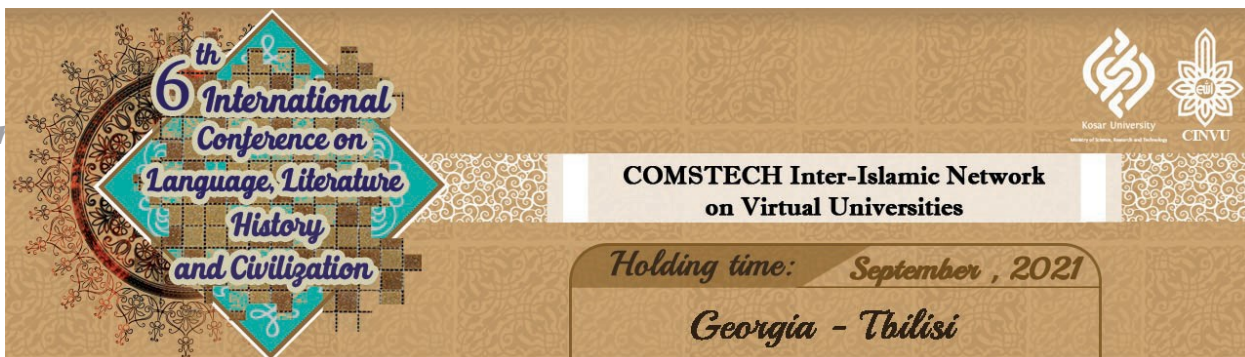
The most important and notable stylistic feature shared by the novels is the employment of stream of consciousness; Virginia Woolf is a well-recognized practitioner of this technique [12]. This term was first used by an American psychologist William James who states that "conscious then does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as "chain" or "train" do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A "river" or a "stream" are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life" [13]. In literature, stream of consciousness refers to the technique which describes the inconstant flow of characters' minds and their personal inner experiences using arduous language [14] [13]. Modern novels often make use of stream of consciousness to present different levels of human consciousness and look both inward into the mind and outward at the world from that mind, adopting the techniques of interior monologue and sensory impression and departing from directive commentary and conventional paragraphing, syntax and punctuation to express characters' inner lives [15]. Though we use language to think, this process and the nature of consciousness do not take place in grammatically perfect structures; this is why the modern writer departs from ordinary and conventional linguistic usages [14]. Saha also claims that "the grammatically approved syntax is thrown overboard and a droll looking, fluid construction of sentences are adopted to express the ceaseless flow to thought process" [14].

The use of stream of consciousness technique in both novels seems to be an attempt to present characters' inner lives while communicating their past realistically and naturally. Woolf and Salar have both taken advantage of psychological and linguistic repetition, often encountered in the stream of consciousness and generally modernist novels [3]. This is because a certain thought or feeling can come across one's mind several times, especially when there is obsession about something. This is to indicate that the character keeps coming back to, or is fixating on, a certain thought which also helps readers to find the themes and motifs of the story. Having said this, their stylistic use of sequences of breaking sentences in order to show the natural flow of consciousness is different. Thoughts are often not fully formed, they change course in the middle textually realized by run-on sentences, and are often interrupted by another thought. Woolf's use of run-on sentences accords better with the definition of stream of consciousness as her sentences are not fully formed, being dragged for several lines until a sentence is finally over. However, Salar's use of run-on sentences is basically an amalgamation of mostly complete sentences which are simply separated by ellipsis.

### **Patterns of Transitivity Profiles in English and Persian Modern Fiction**

Despite the numerous stylistic and content-related similarities between *Mrs. Dalloway* and [I] *Am Probably Lost*, there seems to be a noticeable difference between the methods of presenting the central characters of these two novels. This difference in characterization can be potentially inspected through two stylistic domains: examination of transitivity and/or point of view in the narrative discourse [16]. As for point of view, there is a marked distinction between *Mrs. Dalloway*'s third-person omniscient narrator and [II] *Am Probably Lost*'s first-person narrator. Though this distinction contributes to the difference in characterization, the focus of this study is on the 'transitivity profile' of the eponymous protagonist of *Mrs. Dalloway* and the anonymous narrator in [II] *Am Probably Lost*. Transitivity profile refers to the collection of processes chosen to describe a specific character throughout the narrative [16]. Writers' stylistic choice of processes then relates to issues of characterization, and will help to demonstrate the differences despite similarities. That is, the different transitivity profiles, itself partially a result of difference in language systems, will explain the difference in character interpretation.





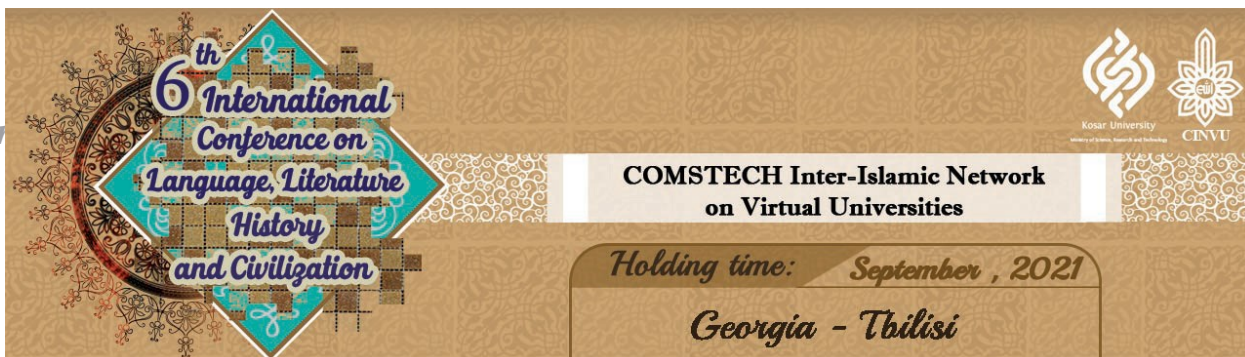
The system of transitivity is one of the three meta-functions (textual, interpersonal, experiential) of language in functional grammar [10], and models different categorizations of ‘experience’ which Halliday defines as “consisting [of] a flow of events, or ‘goings-on’” [10]. He further argues that the flow of events can be divided into “quanta of change” which are grouped among material, behavioural, mental, verbal, relational, or existential processes of transitivity [10]. All these different processes are semanticized in language through verb phrases (VPs) in a clause, and contain specific participant roles (NPs) and circumstances [10]. Material clauses are processes of doing and happening which require “some input of energy” and include the participant roles of Actor and Goal [10]. Mental clauses are those processes that happen in consciousness or our internal world and include the participant roles of Sensor and Phenomenon. Somewhere between these two categories are behavioural processes which relate to “(typically human) physiological and psychological behaviour like breathing, coughing ... and staring” and include the participant role of Behaver [10]. Next are verbal clauses which are processes of saying and include the participant roles of Sayer, Receiver, Verbiage and Target [10]. The category of relational clauses is more complicated as it is subdivided into intensive, possessive and circumstantial each of which can be either attributive or identifying [10]. Relational processes “serve to characterize and to identify ... [and] model experience as ‘being’ rather than as ‘doing’ or ‘sensing’” and include the roles of Attribute and Carrier [10]. Finally, existential clauses convey that something exists and include the participant role of Existent [10]. Since the system of transitivity explains the experiential structure of clause, it is a suitable tool to examine novelistic narratives which also describe the experience of characters. That is, the abundance of certain process types in a narrative will accordingly contribute to readers’ interpretation of the narrator and/or characterization. For example, the abundance of material processes of doing in a certain character’s transitivity profile is a marker of agency (p. 224) whereas the abundance of mental processes highlights the consciousness of the character as the participant role of Sensor [10], and, furthermore, the abundance of relational processes may indicate a “sense of stasis in the scene” because these processes are descriptive and lack the element of agency [16]. Hence, transitivity profiles become the linguistic manifestations of character development and are used in this study as a means to compare and contrast Clarissa Dalloway with the anonymous first-person narrator of [I] *Am Probably Lost*.

Based on Halliday’s model of transitivity, the beginning parts of the two novels were then analyzed and accordingly classified (Appendix 1 and 2). More specifically, the narrative of *Mrs. Dalloway* was examined from the first sentence until Clarissa arrives at Mulberry’s the florists and the narrative of [I] *Am Probably Lost* was analyzed from the beginning until the narrator arrives at her son’s kindergarten. This choice was made due to the similarity in and parallel structure of plot as both characters are set in their house in the morning and plan to go somewhere to run an errand. Also, these two sections are comprised of around 3000 words each. The findings of Clarissa’s transitivity profile showed that Woolf has used a total of 201 verbal processes of which 64 are material, 70 mental, 10 behavioural, 43 relational, and 14 verbal. On the other hand, Salar’s writing includes 123 material, 94 mental, 24 behavioural, 22 relational, and 23 verbal processes in a total of 286 VPs used in the narrator’s transitivity profile.

Halliday subdivides material processes into two categories: happening and doing. ‘Happening’ material processes are those intransitive VPs limited to the role of Actor/Subject whereas action in ‘doing’ material processes is extended to a Goal/Object [10]. This means that there is only agency in the material processes of doing and not happening. Based on this classification, then, there are 31 happening processes and 33 doing processes in Clarissa’s transitivity profile; however, 8 VPs among the doing category are negative and in 3 of them Clarissa is the Goal not the Actor. Therefore, there is a total of 22 processes (10.9 percent in total) marked with Clarissa’s agency which are displayed in the table 1 below:

**Table 1-Clarissa’s material processes marked with agency**

Process	Verbs
Doing material	Would buy, had burst open, plunged at, making up, building, tumbling, creating, to give, had visited, would marry, had to break with, had got through, driving, throwing, trying to recover, read, to take, did, to make, wore, gave, pushing through



The first of these processes “would buy” belongs to the Locution clause projected in the first verbal clause of the narrative [10]; therefore, it is not a realized action but a report of Clarissa’s conversation with Lucy. Also, the four processes of “making up”, “building”, “tumbling”, and “creating” are used here metaphorically to describe life and London as lived by people passionate about it [1]. These four processes and others such as “would marry”, itself Peter Walsh’s reported Locution clause, or “take” are VPs in Idea clauses projected in Clarissa’s thoughts, either directly or through the third-person omniscient narrator in the form of stream of consciousness, and not actualized actions in real life. The verb “wore” in “this body she wore” [1] is another metaphorical instance which highlights Clarissa’s self-awareness. Overall, Woolf’s descriptions of her protagonist seem to steer clear of processes with agency, and this writing style has contributed to the avant-garde and experimental quality of her story-telling technique at the time, which highlighted inner self rather than actions and plot.

On the other hand, the material processes of [I] *Am Probably Lost* consist of 43 happening material processes and 79 doing material processes. Among the doing material category, there are 6 processes with the role of narrator as the Goal not the Actor and 5 negative processes; however, 3 of these negative processes are done intentionally giving them the property of agency. For instance, it is narrated that when the protagonist’s husband calls her, she doesn’t pick up the phone. In this case, not picking up, though a negative VP, carries the agency of the Actor as it is her intention not to do the action. In other words, she is able to pick up the phone but she doesn’t do it because she doesn’t want to, not because she cannot. There are also 6 processes belonging to quoted Locution clauses. Among these include 2 clauses of ordering “Don’t call me a scaredy-cat” and “Close the door tightly”. Since ordering is agentive in nature, these were also included in material processes of doing. Overall, there are a total of 71 material processes (24.8 percent in total) which convey the sense of narrator’s agency and include (the following are translations of the Persian VPs):

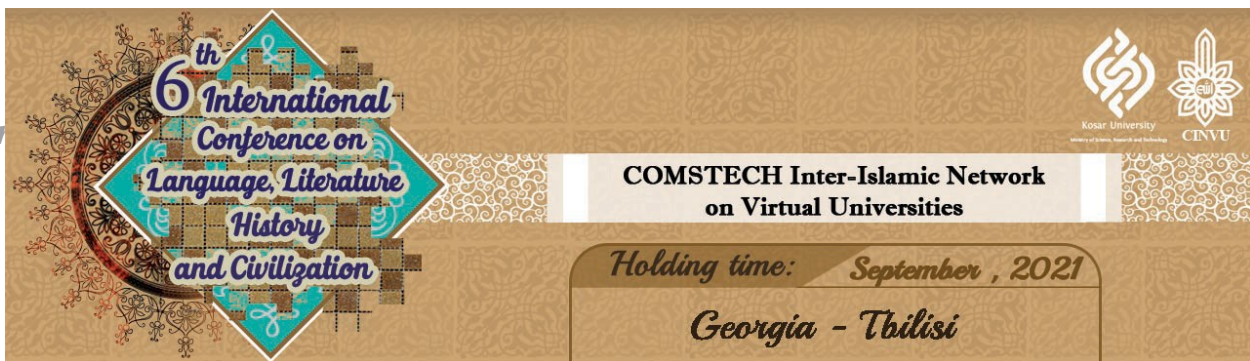
**Table 2- Narrator’s material processes marked with agency**

Process	Verbs
Doing material	[I] stretch out, [I] turn down, [I] don’t pick up, [I] lift, [I] put, [I] had squeezed, [I] had removed, [I] had dressed, [I] had put, [I] had called, [I] stretch out, [I] lean, [I] gave an answer=[I] answer, Don’t call, [I] pick up, [I] open, [I] bend, [I] put, [I] hide, [I] close, [I] put, [I] turn down, [I] don’t pick up, [I] let [it] go on voicemail, [I] pick up, [I] am going to pick up, [I] straighten, [I] to open, [I] open, [I] put down, [I] take, [I] take out, [I] will call, Close, [I] have saved, [I] have saved, [I] have saved, [I] to pick up, wasting, [I] take, [I] do makeup, [I] wear, [I] put on, [I] take, [I] smoked, [I] fasten seatbelt, [I] roll down, [I] open, [I] drink, [I] turn on, [I] start and drive, [I] turn, [I] turned, [I] pick up, [I] drink, [I] don’t pick up, [I] order, [I] pulled out, [I] start and drive, [I] should accelerate, [I] pick up, [We] to eat, to swallow, to eat, [I] take off, [I] have put eyeshadow, [I] put, [I] put on, [I] have worn, [I] roll down

*Footnote:* In the Persian language, verbs acquire certain attached personal pronouns as their ending syllable which indicate the subject of the clause. There are two possibilities then: either the subject is stated at the beginning of the clause, or it is removed since the structure of the verb can indicate the subject on its own. This is why in the translation of the VPs above, the pronoun “I” is put in **brackets** being the equivalent of the **attached nominal pronoun** to the verb.

One noticeable trend was that [I] *Am Probably Lost*’s narrative included many instances of self-directed material processes where both Actor and Goal were the same entity [16]. For example, the first of the above processes belongs to the clause “[I] stretch out my arm towards it”. Here, the nominal pronoun attached to the verb indicates the Actor who is the first-person narrator ‘I’, and at the same time, the Goal of the sentence is “my hand” which means the action is self-directed. Similarly, in the clause “[I] take myself to





the bedroom”, the Actor is the first person nominal pronoun attached to the verb and the Goal is the reflexive pronoun “myself”. There are a total of 21 such self-directed processes. This means that almost 29.5 percent of the character’s agentive material processes affect herself not the world around her. Nevertheless, it also emphasizes her control over herself and her behaviours. This trait of hers is also apparent in the way she decides not to pick up the phone, or send the maid back home because her presence discomforts her, or other instances throughout the narrative when she does as she wishes regardless of the situation.

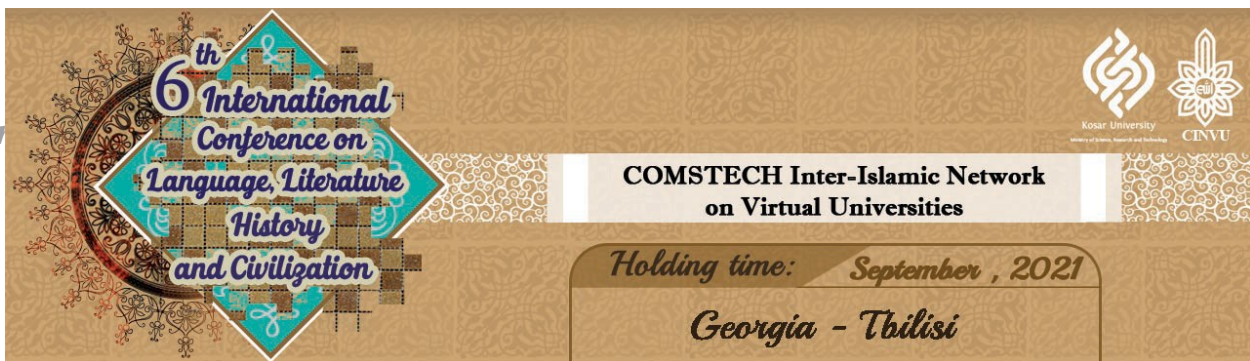
As mentioned before, both writers make use of the narrative technique of stream of consciousness which is a record of character introspection or the unbroken flow of thoughts through consciousness [17]. Hence, it is expected that such narratives include a salient amount of mental processes since these processes are concerned with semanticizing inner experiences. In the examined passage from *Mrs. Dalloway*, the category of mental processes is ranked first with a total of 70 VPs which makes up 34.8 percent of Clarissa’s transitivity profile. Here, mental processes used in descriptions of Clarissa are 3 percent more than material processes which make up 31.8 percent of the data. On the other hand, among categories of transitivity in [I] *Am Probably Lost*, mental processes come second to material processes. In this passage, there are 94 mental processes comprising 32.8 percent of the narrator’s transitivity profile which is 10.2 percent less than material processes with 43 percentage of all VPs. This difference is a decisive stylistic marker because mental processes highlight consciousness whereas material processes emphasize physical movement and agency. Since one key criterion of modern fiction is its mission to revive the importance of human inner world, we can then argue that the compositional proportion of mental processes in Woolf’s writing is a more apt linguistic strategy for achieving this effect. As Halliday also underlines, one important property of the role of Sensor in mental processes is “being endowed with consciousness” [10]. Accordingly, Salar’s style falls short of the linguistic characteristic expected of a depiction of a modern individual through stream of consciousness. This deduction is of course based on Halliday’s understanding of the impact of process abundance, and other factors may disagree with this argument.

As mentioned earlier, behavioural processes are on the border between material and mental processes. Halliday explains that though the Behaver in these clauses is conscious similar to the Sensor of mental processes, the process itself is more similar to the material category [10]. On the one hand, the use of such processes in modern narrative helps to emphasize the consciousness of the character; on the other hand, it adds to the sense of action which is undesired in such passages. Therefore, these processes can function dually as having both negative and positive stylistic effects in modern fiction. Having said that, neither *Mrs. Dalloway* nor [I] *Am Probably Lost* contains a noticeable number of behavioural processes. Comprising only 4.9 percent of the data, behavioural processes in Clarissa’s transitivity profile include only 10 VPs. This number is higher in [I] *Am Probably Lost*’s examined passage which is comprised of 8.3 percent behavioural processes with 24 VPs.

Another important categorical difference between the two passages was the number of relational processes. These processes “construe change as unfolding ‘inertly’, without input of energy”, and in this sense resemble mental processes [10]. They are, however, distinct from other processes in terms of the highly generalized nature of the verb which also indicates its “weak presence” in the clause [10]. Relational processes are frequently found in the descriptive passages of fictional narratives, and produce the stylistic effect of stasis [10]. Therefore, the abundance of relational clauses in a modern narrative can be seen as helpful because they relate events as static subsequently reducing the sense of movement and agency and adding to the sense of entrapment. Whereas relational processes make up 21.3 percent of Clarissa’s transitivity profile, this number is much lower in [I] *Am Probably Lost* with only 7.6 percent.

Among the unconventional properties of Woolf’s narrative, related to stream of consciousness [18], is the technique of free indirect discourse, especially free indirect thought. This means that in the presentation of character speech and/or thought, the speaker or the person thinking is not separately revealed while the content of the speech and/or thought is grammatically converted to its indirect form [16]. This presentational mode then produces “the impression ... of both a character and narrator speaking simultaneously” [16] which in turn makes the experience of reading more challenging. Using this technique in a fictional narrative means that the number of both verbal processes of report of speech (saying) and mental processes of report of thought (thinking) should reduce significantly. As expected, this estimation





can be found in Clarissa's transitivity profile with only 8 instances of direct report of thought and 4 instances of direct report of speech. However, point of view in [I] *Am Probably Lost* is different and the first-person narrator uses the direct mode of speech and thought presentation more often than not, marking the distinction between her reality and the analeptic flow of her thoughts. In the examined passage from this novel, there are a total of 20 mental processes of thought presentation and 16 verbal processes of speech presentation. Such direct presentations of speech and thought make the experience of reading easier, but also fail to capture the natural flow of consciousness by breaking the flow of the text.

Lack of agency in Clarissa's characterization is not stylistically limited to the low number of material processes of doing in her transitivity profile. Takala also observes the use of "subject-less nonfinite verb phrases" among the stylistic features of Woolf's discourse, which, she argues, help to reduce the sense of agency as these phrases depend on other parent clauses for the interpretation of subject and tense [19]. Examples of such phrases include "standing there at the open window" and "looking at the flowers" [1]. In the English language, there are three types of non-finite verbs including infinitive, gerund, and participle [20]. Takala's report of Woolf's application of non-finite verbs are centered on her use of gerund [19] which is the attachment of -ing to the verb stem [20]. This form of the non-finite is distinct from infinitive verbs which are often formed by adding the preposition 'to' to the verb stem [20]. The important distinction among these three types of the non-finite, related to this study, lies in their usage. In the clause, the -ing form can be used as a verb, noun or adjective whereas the infinitive form does not function as a verb [20]. Swan divides the -ing form into gerund and participle by assigning the usage as verb to the category of gerund, and the usage as noun to the category of participle [20]. Therefore, only gerund can take the role of verb in the clause, which is the case in Woolf's narrative as she repeatedly implements the -ing form in her descriptions.

In comparison to English, the Persian language contains only one form of non-finite verbs. The main formula for making the Persian non-finite is the addition of '-tan' to verb stems, which can only function as a noun. The Persian non-finite can then be considered as similar to English infinitive, considering their role in a clause, which is rarely found in narrative passages; the use of this form of non-finite can even be thought strange (replace and compare "looking at the flowers" with "to look at the flowers" in *Mrs. Dalloway*). Consequently, Woolf's technique of "nonfinite verb phrases" cannot easily be adapted into Persian narratives since no exact equivalent of English gerund exists in Persian. In the examined passage from [I] *Am Probably Lost*, there are only a handful of non-finite verb phrases used. One example would be the sentence "Gandom used to say that [they] should award me with a doctorate for lying around and thinking and wasting [my] day" [2]. Here, the three non-finite instances function as nominal objects in the prepositional phrase. Accordingly, Persian does not allow the use of "subject-less nonfinite verb phrases" as a technique to present lack of agency though its value as a measuring scale remains to be studied.

Moreover, there is the issue of subject-less clauses in English and Persian. In her comparative linguistic study, Kiaer states that subject-less-ness is a common phenomenon in certain languages like Korean and Japanese even though subjects are considered obligatory in English grammar [21]. Yet, Woolf's use of subject-less clauses is grammatically justified because of her technique of ellipsis. This means that the removal of subject from the clause does not disable readers from discovering the subject altogether, but rather challenges them to return to parent clauses for the interpretation of the subject [19]. While removing the subject from an English clause, though uncommon, is possible, the Persian language, as mentioned before, does not provide a complete absence of subject from the clause since pronominal affixes attached to verbs reveal the subject anyway. Hence, the feature of ambiguity in Woolf's clauses achieved through the omission of subject and tense cannot be easily attained in Persian. Takala argues that the linguistic complication caused by "subjectless nonfinite verb phrases" forces readers to move backward and forward for understanding the text, and acts like a parallel to the progression of plot which also moves back and forth in time [19]. The absence of this ambiguous complication in Salar's descriptions creates the effects of clarity and agency for the narrator due to the presence of tense and subject.

Woolf's use of ellipsis in *Mrs. Dalloway* is extended to clause predicators as well. In fact, it is her abundant use of predicator-less (P-less) clauses in the narrative which has contributed to the lower number of processes/VPs compared to [I] *Am Probably Lost* (Clarissa's transitivity profile: 201 processes vs. [I] *Am*



*Probably Lost*'s narrator's transitivity profile: 286 processes). For instance, in the excerpt "(1) looking at the flowers, (2) at the trees with the smoke winding off them (3) and the rooks rising, falling" (Woolf, 3), the first clause is what Takala calls the "subjectless nonfinite" structure [19]; in the second clause, both subject (Clarissa) and main verb (looking) are removed; the third clause is devoid of subject (Clarissa), main verb (looking) and prepositional particle [10]. Such P-less elliptical structures are termed 'minor clauses' and depend on their co-text for the conveyance of meaning [16]. It is interesting to note that minor clauses in Salar's narrative, though uncommon, are mostly found in conversational pairs between the narrator and her therapist; the narrator's sudden reports of small pieces of her therapy sessions are part of the writer's strategy for stream of consciousness technique. For instance, the narrator reports that "Doctor asked: "How long has it been since you broke up with Gandom?" to which she reports herself to have replied and elliptically says "[I] said: "Eight years." [2]. Simpson also notes that ellipsis is very common in everyday language [16] which subsequently indicates Salar's attempt at presenting realistic pieces of everyday language in narrator's direct presentations of her speech with the therapist. In another instance, Salar replaces the verb 'think' with its noun form 'thought' in "again, this thought that if an earthquake hits right now, this bridge will ...," making a P-less structure; however, such structures are rarely found in her novel [2].

### Conclusion

This paper was an attempt to study the stylistic differences and their interpretational effects in two novel of *Mrs. Dalloway* and [I] *Am Probably Lost*, some of which are rooted in the different nature of their distinct languages, i.e. English and Persian respectively. We used Halliday's model of transitivity as the main stylistic tool in order to examine verb phrases in selected excerpts from the novels. Results showed that Woolf's choice of verbal phrases and processes is more apt for expressing modern experience, and it was also noted that this interpretation is based on Halliday's theory of how the abundance of certain process types affects our interpretation of characterization. Since Halliday's model is fundamentally based on the English language, the difference in the system of Persian language needs to be accounted for. Nonetheless, this study can be a beginning step in comparative stylistics in order to better our understanding of how different systems of language provide or limit unique stylistic tools for writers, and more importantly, how these unique stylistic tools affect the interpretation of characters by readers.





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