

A Transitivity Study of Gilbert Blythe's Characters in *Anne with an E* Series

Anggi Nazliza Salma Andini¹ & Mytha Candria²

^{1,2}English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Diponegoro

Email address: mythacandria@live.undip.ac.id

Received: Dec 15, 2024 | Reviewed: Dec 18, 2024 | Revised: Dec 24, 2024 | Accepted: Dec 26, 2024

ABSTRACT: This research investigates the characterization of Gilbert Blythe, the main male character of *Anne with an E* series, produced by Moira Walley-Beckett and aired by Netflix in 2017, 2018, and 2019. The primary purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the transitivity processes used to portray Gilbert Blythe's personality traits in three seasons of the series. By utilizing Halliday's transitivity theory (2014), this study focuses on clauses where Blythe appears as participants or circumstantial elements. Data were collected through document-analysis method and note-taking technique. The results indicate that Blythe is adventurous, determined, confident, and considerate. The traits are communicated through material, mental, relational, verbal, and behavioural processes, with material process the most prominent. The predominance of the material process suggests that Blythe is an active character who takes action to pursue new experiences and work toward his chosen vocation. It also reflects the emphasis on physical actions, particularly in how Blythe interacts with and assists other characters in disadvantaged situations.

Keywords: *Systemic Functional Linguistics, Transitivity System, characterization, Anne with an E, Gilbert Blythe*

INTRODUCTION

Anne with an E is a series adaptation reimagining *Anne of Green Gables*, a timeless classic in children's literature by Canadian author Lucy Maud Montgomery (1908). The series adaptation, however, reframes the original story with a contemporary viewpoint, most notably through storylines that expand upon the original themes, so that the characters identify relevant issues of social prejudice and injustice, encompassing race and gender discrimination (Abbiss, 2020; Collins, 2023). *Anne with an E* first premiered in 2017 and ran for three seasons, totaling twenty-seven episodes. The series (Seasons 1, 2 and 3) have been studied using feminist literary criticisms, language and gender, and linguistic stylistics, but none of these studies use Halliday's Transitivity Model to investigate the characterization of Gilbert Blythe, the male protagonist of the novel and the adaptation series.

Two studies within the domain of literature were conducted by Rahma (2023) and Wardani

(2023). They explored the representation of liberal feminism in *Anne with an E*. Hnatow (2020) used feminist media perspective to investigate the representation of girlhood in the series. Within the domain of linguistics, Annisa and Elfiondri (2021) studied the use of hyperbole in *Anne with an E*. Meanwhile, Damayanti (2023) used Coates's language features to investigate the differences and similarities between men and women language features of the main characters in *Anne with an E*.

The series features two main characters, i.e. Anne Shirley and Gilbert Blythe. Some literary and linguistic studies have been carried out examine Anne Shirley in the series (Hanifah, 2021; Damayanti, 2023; Sitorus, Palupi, & Danadharta, 2023; Wardani, 2023; Widyasari, Widiastuti & Qomariana, 2023). However, at the time of our conducting this research, only one study is reported to investigate Gilbert Blythe. This is the reason the researchers were interested in studying Gilbert Blythe further. This research then proceeded to discover the characterization of Gilbert Blythe in *Anne with an E* Series from a systemic functional linguistic approach.

While *Anne with an E* has been discussed in some research, none has addressed the series within the framework of Halliday's transitivity system (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Hence, in current study, the researchers provide a linguistic interpretation of Gilbert Blythe's portrayal using Halliday's transitivity framework. The system of transitivity is rooted in the argument that language represents human internal and external experiences (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Thompson, 2014). The system focuses on clauses as configurations of processes, participants, and circumstances, with processes and participants being essential and circumstances being optional. A process is realized by a verbal group, a participant is manifested by a nominal group, and a circumstance is articulated by a prepositional phrase or an adverbial group.

Within the system of transitivity, the internal and external goings-on in the world are conveyed through six processes: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential

processes. A material process is a process of doing and happening, involving an essential participant that does the process, called ‘Actor’ (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). A material process may be directed into a ‘Goal’ and may be done for the sake of a ‘Client’ or a ‘Recipient’ (Thompson, 2014). Mental clauses concern inner happenings, such as cognitive, affective, or perceptive processes; within this context, only a conscious being can undergo a mental process, and the conscious being going through a mental process is a ‘Sensor’, while the participant becoming the target of the mental process is a ‘Phenomenon’ (Fontaine, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Thompson, 2014).

A relational process is a process of being and having; it can be classified into an attributive relational process or an identifying relational process. Next, a verbal process is a process of saying, and two participants involved in the process are ‘Sayer’ and ‘Verbiage.’ A behavioral clause represents human physiological or psychological process, such as *laugh, smile, yawn, sleep* or *cry*, and the participant involved in the behavioral process is a Behaver (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Finally, an existential clause articulates that “something exists or happens” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 307), as in *There are some new books in our library*.

METHOD

This study is categorized into descriptive qualitative research. The data were restricted to selected clauses wherein Gilbert Blythe appears as participants or circumstantial elements. Since the purpose of the study is to identify the characterization of Gilbert Blythe, the researchers focused on selected clauses that show the qualities or image of Gilbert Blythe’s characters. The data were collected using a document-analysis method and note-taking technique. After collecting the data, the researchers closely examined the types of transitivity process and Gilbert’s role within the transitivity clauses.

FINDINGS

The results of the study are compiled in the following table to illustrate Gilbert's characters into categories of characterization.

Table 1. A Transitivity Analysis of Gilbert Blythe's Characters

Gilbert Blythe's Characters	Transitivity Analysis														
	Material			Mental			Relational			Verbal			Behavioral		
	AC	GL	CL	SE	PHE	CR	AT	TK	VL	ACC	SY	RC	VB	BHV	PHN
Adventurous	9	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Determined	8	-	3	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Confident	1	-	-	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Considerate	12	-	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-

All categories of Gilbert Blythe's characters are conveyed through material, mental, relational, verbal, and behavioral processes. In all processes Gilbert is assigned as an active participant: Actor (AC), Senser (SE), Carrier (CR), Token (TK), Sayer (SY), and Behavior (BHV). However, the scriptwriter also employs some transitivity clauses involving Gilbert as a passive participant and a part of circumstantial element. He is a Client (CL) in the material process and a Phenomenon (PHE) in mental processes.

Table 1 suggests that material process is the dominant process used by the scriptwriter to depict Gilbert. The table also reveals that he functions as Actor in 30 out of 33 material processes, highlighting that he is an active character, who acts to pursue his interest in seeking new experiences and make necessary efforts towards his vocation. At the same time, the scriptwriter utilizes material processes to illustrate that Gilbert is a caring individual that carries out real actions to care for the needy.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Gilbert Blythe's Characters

Adventurous

Gilbert's adventurous character is portrayed through his urge to try new idea of embarking

on an adventure in pursuit of new experiences, as is represented in this clause (001):

001/ G/ Me	I	want to see	some of the world	first
	Senser	Pr: mental	Phenomenon	Circ: manner

The scriptwriter used the mental process in datum 001 to give information that Gilbert had come up with an idea of embarking on an adventure. After his father passed away, Gilbert decided to absent himself from school and leave behind his stable life in his hometown, Avonlea. The mental process *to see* expresses the activity of perceiving the physical world, which is clearly explained by the phenomenon *some of the world*. The scriptwriter employed the configuration to show Gilbert's desire to explore the world and that he was eager to explore new experiences.

In addition to mental processes, material processes are used to reveal Gilbert's adventurous traits, as is demonstrated in the following clause:

002/ B/ Ma	You	find	yourself	this far	from Avonlea
	Actor	Pr: material	Scope	Circ: extent	Circ: place

While working on a steamship, Gilbert had the experience of exploring new places. The material clause (002) is Bash's verbiage when he and Gilbert just arrived in Trinidad, Bash's hometown. The material process occurs with distance circumstance *this far*, which illustrates that Gilbert's position was a significant away from his hometown of Avonlea. This clause reflects that he had traveled a significant distance to get somewhere and ended up in a place far from his familiar surroundings of where he came.

Gilbert's adventurous nature is also portrayed using a relational clause, as in this clause:

003/ G/ Re	Seeing the world,	trying new things,	what could be better?
	Pr: Mental	Pr: Material	Pr: Relational

Through datum 003, the scriptwriter depicts a sense of joy and satisfaction Gilbert experienced during his visit to Trinidad. It implies an indication of Gilbert's positive attitude toward adventure and new experiences, as he found immense excitement and satisfaction in

physically exploring new places and trying something he had never done before. During his journey, it can be seen that Gilbert's adventurous spirit led him to cope with a new and unfamiliar environment; yet, it also opened up new and interesting experiences that he genuinely enjoyed.

Determined

Throughout the series, Gilbert demonstrates a firm drive and determination towards his academic and career pursuits. The scriptwriter assigns Gilbert to non-goal-oriented material processes to assert that Gilbert's determination of pursuing his ambitions served as a driving force that constantly motivated him to take necessary action.

004/ G /Ma	I	managed to learn	the material	with no extra time from you
	Actor	Pr: material	Scope	Circ: manner

In the previous clause, through a manner circumstance occurring in the material process *learn*, the scriptwriter emphasizes Gilbert's determined effort to study on his own because his teacher, Mr. Phillips, refused to help him when he asked for extra study help. This configuration exhibits that he did not allow the refusal deter him to study, considering the need to learn the material is apparent for his objective of attending medical school. The material clause, therefore, demonstrates a sense of persistence that reinforces the claim of Gilbert's determination.

005/ G/ Ma	I	would give	anything	to be there
	Actor	Pr: material	Scope	Circ: reason

The configuration of clause (005), where the scope of *anything* occurs in the material process *would give*, elaborates that Gilbert was determined to do whatever was necessary to achieve the objective, hinted at in the reason circumstances *to be there*. This circumstance represents Gilbert's desire and aspiration to help others and make a positive impact despite the amount of medical knowledge yet to be discovered. Gilbert further expressed his profound desire to contribute to solving the challenges, demonstrating his determination to go to great lengths and

make significant actions.

Confident

According to Cambridge University Press (n.d.), “confident” means “being certain of the abilities or having trust in people, plans, or the future.” The word “confident” also means “having a feeling or belief that you can do something well or succeed at something” (Merriam-Webster, 2008, p. 339). In this category of Gilbert’s characterization, a relational clause, mental clauses, and a material clause are used to imply that Gilbert is a confident individual.

In this category, relational process is used to explain that the experience Gilbert had from working as a coal trimmer helped him to recognize his ability to commit work hard.

023/ G /Re	I	have	a strong work ethic
	Carrier/possessor	Pr: Possessive attributive relational	Attribute/possession

Gilbert’s verbiage in clause (023) is directed to Mr. Phillips when Gilbert attempted to convince Phillips of his ambition and requested extra study help. The datum belongs to attributive possessive, indicated by the verb *have*, in which the carrier *I/Gilbert* is a possessor. This configuration demonstrates an assertive declaration of his qualities, implying a characteristic of confident individuals. Gilbert asserted that he could extra put in effort if Mr. Phillips agrees to provide him with extra study help.

The cognitive mental processes occur with accompanying metaphenomenon to reveal the senser’s opinion or viewpoint. The scriptwriter used mental processes *know* to signify Gilbert’s conviction in his plan.

24	Gilbert:	“I have a strong work ethic, Sir, and I have chosen my vocation. Medical school, Sir. I know it is for me. ”
25	Gilbert:	“ I know what I must not be. A country doctor, limited to delivering death sentences.”

024 / G / Me	I	know	it is for me
	Senser	Pr: mental	Phenomenon

Clauses (24 and 25) present mental process configurations of cognitive subtype process *know* to explain that Gilbert Blythe, identified as senser *I*, engaged in the activity of thinking. Gilbert’s cognitive process involves acquiring understanding from what he has already considered before giving decisions about his plan. In datum 024, the pronoun *it* refers to medical school. The cognitive process *know* underscores senser’s conviction, represented in metaphenomenon, suggesting that Gilbert felt certain about his plan and decision to pursue medical school, as it aligned with his interest and felt like his true calling. In essence, the mental process *know* in clause (024) denotes Gilbert’s certainty regarding his chosen path. It demonstrates a decisiveness that reinforces his confidence.

Considerate

The series sheds light on Gilbert’s considerate nature through the relationships he shared with Black characters, primarily with Bash and Mary. Bash is Gilbert’s coal-trimmer’s mate, and Mary is Bash’s wife. Within this context, the scriptwriter used both non-goal-oriented and goal-oriented material processes to illustrate Gilbert’s physical actions and his initiative to provide assistance as a helpful and caring individual:

006/ G/	I	‘ll take	you	to him	right now
Ma	Actor	Pr: material	Client	Circ: place	Circ: time

In the series, Bash experienced racism while trying to get medicine for his toothache. Gilbert’s response in datum 006 shows that he cared for Bash, as he took the initiative to help Bash by taking him to a doctor in Charlottetown who can help him for medical care. Aside from taking an active role, Gilbert also appears as a passive participant and circumstantial element in transitivity clauses. The transitivity clauses provide evidence of Gilbert’s significant contributions

as a caring and reliable partner to both Bash and Mary.

007/ Ma/ Me	I		appreciate		you		so much	
	Senser		Pr: mental		Phenomenon		Circ: manner	
008/ M / Re	I	am	grateful	knowing	Bash	is	safe	with you
				Pr: mental	Carrier	Pr: Intensive attributive relational	Attribute	Circ: Acc
	Carrier	Pr: Intensive attributive relational	Attribute			Circ: matter		

In datum 007, the cognitive mental process *appreciate* is used to project Mary's inner experience related to her feeling of gratitude for the phenomenon *You/Gilbert Blythe*. The clause was spoken after Gilbert agreed to look for Elijah, Mary's rebellious son, to ask him to visit Mary because she had limited time left due to her illness. This process is used specifically to demonstrate senser's profound appreciation for Gilbert's action and his kindness in helping her.

Besides, the scriptwriter also employed relational process, portraying Gilbert's role as a circumstantial element in Mary's transitivity process. Mary, the carrier, is assigned with the attribute *grateful* that signifies her feeling of relief. In datum 08, the relational process occurs with the matter circumstance of something Mary is grateful for, where the lexicon *safe* is used to depict positive attribute associated with Bash, Mary's husband. Gilbert's role as the accompaniment circumstance in the relational process gives the meaning that he was a dependable partner for Mary's husband. Mary's shared experiences with Gilbert made her think of him as someone she could trust.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In this study, the researchers employed Halliday's Transitivity Model to examine the

characterization of Gilbert Blythe, the male protagonist in the Netflix series entitled *Anne with an E*. The researchers identified the types of transitivity processes used in the series and investigated how these processes describe Gilbert Blythe's characters.

The researchers discovered that throughout the series, Gilbert Blythe is portrayed as adventurous, determined, confident, and considerate. He is eager to explore new experiences, including making a risky decision to work in a new environment and explore new places. Gilbert is also determined in pursuing his career, driven by his actions and dedications to achieve his goal. In addition, his confident qualities are highlighted during the series through relational and mental processes. Finally, material, mental, and relational clauses reveal that Gilbert is a considerate individual, who is willing to help and care for the needy, whoever they are.

This all suggests that a transitivity study of a series character would help to reveal and understand their characterization. Within the context of this article, a transitivity reading of clauses embedded to Gilbert Blythe sheds light on who and how Gilbert is. However, since the focus of study is on the transitivity analysis of the series, the researchers do not consider how the interpersonal investigation of the series would be as fruitful. Further research can be carried out using Halliday's interpersonal metafunction to obtain deeper and more thorough understandings of the characterizations of the *Anne* series.

REFERENCES

- Abbiss, W. (2020). Big words and big ideas: The reconstruction of cultural identity in *Anne with an E*. *The Literature Film Association*. Paper presented at Literature/Film Association 2020 Online Conference.
- Annisa, H. I., & Elfiondri. (2021). *An analysis of hyperbolic expressions in the movie Anne with an E* (Diploma thesis, Bung Hatta University).
- Cambridge University Press & Assessment. (n.d.). In *dictionary.Cambridge.com*. Retrieved July 24, 2024, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>
- Collins, K. (2023). *Anne with an "E": Revisions on singleness*. *麗澤レビュー*, 29, 4-10.
- Damayanti, R. (2023). *The differences and similarities of men's and women's language features used by main characters in Anne with an E series* (Undergraduate Thesis, Universitas Islam <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14556872>)

Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya).

- Fontaine, L. (2013). *Analysing English Grammar: A Sytemic Functional Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hanifah, F. (2021). *Analisis Standpoint Theory Feminisme Indonesia pada Citra Perempuan dalam TV Serial Netflix Anne with an E* (Undergraduate Thesis, Universitas Bakrie).
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). *An Introduction to functional grammar* (4th Ed.). Oxon: Routledge.
- Hnatow, A. E. (2020). *Anne-Girls: Investigating contemporary girlhood through Anne with an E* (Undergraduate thesis, University of Pittsburgh).
- Merriam-Webster. (2008). Confident. In *Merriam-Webster's Advance Learner's English Dictionary* (1st Ed, p. 339).
- Rahma, H. (2023). *The implications of patriarchal culture toward gender discrimination behavior in Anne with an E movie series* (Undergraduate Thesis, State Islamic University of Syarif Hidayatullah).
- Sitorus, C. N., Palupi, M. F. T., & Danadharta, I. (2023). Analisis wacana kritis girl feminism serial Anne with an E season3 episode 6, 7, dan 8. *Prosiding Seminar Komunikasi Mahasiswa Nasional (Semakom)*, 1(2), 176-183.
- Thompson, G. (2014). *Introducing Functional Grammar*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Wardani, E. D. K. (2023). *Analisis semiotika tentang representasi konsep Feminisme Liberal dalam serial drama "Anne With an E: seasons 3* (Undergraduate Thesis, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta).
- Widyasari, N. P. F., Widiastuti, N. M. A., & Qomariana, Y. (2023). Features of women's language used by female characters in Anne with an E series. *Jurnal Sosial Humaniora Sigli*, 6(2), 780–786. <https://doi.org/10.47647/jsh.v6i2.2058>