



## Research Article

# Transitivity-Driven Semantic Shifts and Ideological Mediation in the English Translation of Intizar Hussain's *Wo Jo Kho Gaye*

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## Abstract

This study investigates the dynamics of meaning transfer in literary translation through a comparative analysis of Intizar Hussain's *Wo Jo Kho Gaye* (Hussain, 1990) and its English rendition. Employing Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) with a focus on *transitivity* processes, this study examines how linguistics choices shape semantic shifts between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT). For this, the study utilized a framework proposed by Halliday (1994) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), which is based on six process types—material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential—that are identified and quantified in both texts. The results show that the ST comprises 348 material (39.01%), 238 relational (26.68%), 146 verbal (16.36%), 145 mental (16.25%), 9 behavioral (1%), and 6 existential (0.67%) process, while the TT contains 400 material (40.12%), 287 relational (28.38%), 144 mental (14.44%), 142 verbal (14.24%), 20 existential (2%), and 8 process (0.80%). These variations reflect subtle shifts in narrative emphasis and ideological framing. The translator's strategic use of equivalence, paraphrasing, omission, loan words, and cultural substitutions further contributes to the reconfiguration of meaning. The findings underscore the pivotal role of transitivity in shaping textual interpretation and highlight the translator's agency in negotiating cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Keywords: Transitivity, literary translation, Semantic shifts, Equivalence, Cultural mediation.

## Introduction

The present study investigates the linguistics and ideological shifts that occur during the translation of literary texts (Asad et al., 2019; Ali et al., 2020; Alnuzaili et al., 2024; 2025). Employing the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1994), specifically the transitivity—the transfer of meaning from one language to another—this study examines the Urdu short story *Wo Jo Kho Gaye* by Intizar Hussain and its English translation *Those Who Are Lost* rendered by Rakhshanda Jalil in the anthology *Circle and Other Stories* (Hussain, 1990). The study interrogates how linguistic choices—specifically verb processes—mediate meaning transfers and reflect the translator's interpretive agency (Tymoczko, 2007). Intizar Hussain (1925-2016), a radical figure in Urdu literature, is celebrated for his evocative narrative style, which seamlessly integrates classical *dastan* elements with modernist sensibilities (Hasan, 1985). His *oeuvre*, marked by nostalgia, symbolism, and metaphoric density, often examines themes of displacement, memory, and identity, specifically in the context of the Partition of British India, *Wo Jo Khoya Gaye* exemplifies these motifs, demonstrating the psychological and cultural aftermath of migration through a melancholic lens (Bassnett,

2014). The English translation extends the reach of Hussain's literary imagination, providing global readers access to the socio-historical textures of South Asian experience (Hussain, 1990).

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) initiated by Halliday (1994) gives a robust analytical model of examining how language functions within social contexts. Unlike cognitive or generative approaches, SFL emphasized the communicative purpose of language and its role in shaping experiential meaning. Central to this framework is the transitivity system, which classifies processes into six types—material, mental, rational, verbal, behavioral, and existential—each representing distinct ways of construing reality (Hopper & Thompson, 1980). This study utilizes transitivity analysis to both the source text (ST) and the target text (TT), quantifying and comparing the distribution of process types to unfold semantic shifts and ideological reframing (Baker, 1992). This study conducts a comparative *transitivity* analysis of Intizar Hussain's *Woh Jo Khoye Gaye* and its English translation *Those Who Are Lost*, examining the frequency and classifyingly distribution of process types to examine the fidelity and interpretive variation in meaning transfer (Hussain, 1990; Hopper & Thompson, 1980). The study contributes to translation studies by demonstrating how transitivity analysis can reveal nuanced shifts in meaning and ideology between ST and TT (Tymoczko, 2007; Matu, 2008). It offers insights into the translator's strategic choices—such as paraphrasing, omission, cultural substitution, and equivalence—and their impact on the semantic and ideological integrity of the original text (Ashraf et al., 2021, 2025). By presenting data in tabular and graphical formats, the research enhances reader comprehension and facilitates a granular understanding of linguistic transformation (Leech & Short, 2007).

### Research Questions

RQ1: How can differences in the use of process types resist the transference of meaning while translating source text (ST)?

RQ2: What translation strategies, at functional stage, have been employed by Rakhshanda Jalil in translating Intizar Hussain's story *Who Jo Khoye Haya*?

### Literature Review

This study explores the process of *transitivity* in the ST and the TT encompassing critically analyzing the existing literature and keeping in view the key concerns of the study (Hopper & Thompson, 1980; Hussain, 1990). Since the 1980s, developments in linguistics have shifted from transformational-generative grammar that dominated the 1960s and 1970s to contextualized approaches, represented prominently by text linguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis and critical linguistics (Jabbar et al., 2021; Jalil, 2016; Leech & Short, 2007). Furthermore, Chomsky's perspectives are based on transformation rules to examine only grammatical construction in idealized situations, and it limits its investigations to individual sentences rather than texts (Chomsky, 2005; Ilyas et al., 2023; Ali et al., 2025a; Ali et al., 2021a; 2021b). Text in linguistics examines the way texts are organized, structured, and at sequential relationships as well as patterns of cohesion in the description of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Contrarily, pragmatics is concerned with the purposes, goals and effects of utterances produced in specific social situations (Dar et al., 2024; Fowler, 1986). In addition, discourse analysis ranges from a broader scope, extending from interrelating text grammar and pragmatics to exploring social and power relations emanating from interaction between texts and users.

Translation studies have increasingly drawn upon linguistic theories to explore how meaning is transferred across languages. One of the most influential frameworks is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by Halliday (1994), which views language as a social semiotic system. Within SFL, the transitivity system plays a central role in analyzing how experiences are encoded through processes, participants, and circumstances (Ali et al., 2023a, 2023b). Scholars such as Fowler (1986) and Hasan (1985) have emphasized that transitivity patterns are not merely grammatical but ideological, framing the worldview of the author and shaping how readers interpret texts. In literary translation, transitivity analysis has been used to investigate semantic shifts and stylistic mediation. Baker (1992) highlights that translation strategies often involve shifts at the functional level, where translators adapt processes and participant roles to align with target language norms. This adaptation, however, can resist the full transference of meaning, particularly when the source text employs

culturally specific or stylistically marked structures. Leech and Short (2007) further argue that stylistic foregrounding—both quantitative (deviation from expected frequency) and qualitative (deviation from linguistic norms)—is crucial in preserving or altering the stylistic identity of a text in translation.

Studies (e.g., Ali, 2025c; Alghamdi et al., 2025; Alnuzaili et al., 2025; Khan & Eid, 2021; Munday, 2020; Majeed et al., 2025; Batool & Naz, 2024; Hashmi et al., 2025; Ali & Imran, 2023; Siddique et al., 2023) on South Asian literature in translation, such as those by Bassnett (2014) and Tymoczko (2007), underscore the ideological dimension of translation, noting that translators act as cultural mediators who negotiate between source and target contexts (Alghamdi et al., 2025). In the case of Urdu literature, Rakhshanda Jalil's translations have been recognized for their balance between fidelity to the source text and accessibility for English readers (Jalil, 2016). Her rendering of Intizar Hussain's *Wo Jo Kho Gaye (Those Who Are Lost)* provides a fertile ground for examining how transitivity shifts and translation strategies interact to produce semantic and ideological mediation. Thus, the existing scholarship establishes a strong foundation for analyzing Hussain's story through Halliday's transitivity model. By situating the study within SFL and translation theory, this research contributes to understanding how linguistic choices in translation not only affect semantic accuracy but also mediate cultural and ideological meaning.

## Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-method approach, collectively combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies to examine transitivity shifts in translation. The data for this study comprised of Intizar Hussain's Urdu short story—*Who Jo Kho Gaye* and its English translation *Those Who are Lost* by Rakhshanda Jalil. The analysis was conducted utilizing Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework (1994), typically focusing on transitivity mechanisms which encompasses process, participants, and circumstances as realized through verb eventive process, noun phrases, and adverbial phrases or prepositional phrases. The source text (ST) and target text (TT) were first segmented into clauses, within main verb of each clause examined and categorized into Halliday's six process types—material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential. These classifications were represented to depict frequencies and distribution, permitting quantitative foregrounding, delineated by Leech and Short as deviation from expected frequency, and qualitative foregrounding, defined as deviation from linguistic norms. Quantitative analysis gives statistical evidence of dominant process types and their frequencies shifts, whereas qualitative examination interpreted these shifts in terms of stylistics and ideological mediation, assessing how translation strategies influenced meaning transfer. This research methodology pursues a systematic sequence of identification of process in the ST, presentation of their distribution, identification of corresponding process in the TT, comparing results. By integrating descriptive statistics with functional linguistic analysis, the study evaluates the accuracy of the translated text relative to the original and explores the translator's stylistic and ideological choices.

## Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the paradigm of systematic functional linguistics, developed by Halliday (1994), which views language as social phenomena associated with social semiotic net shaped by context. Central to systematic functional linguistics is the concept of systemic functional grammar, which provides an analysis of language at three levels of metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). However, this study limited to only one function, an ideational metafunction which encodes human experience and represents the natural and cultural world through clauses. Within metafunction, transitivity process serves as primary analytical instrument, encompassing process, participants, and circumstances (Ali et al., 2025b). Transitivity shows how meanings are constructed in clauses and how texts encode worldviews and ideologies (See Ali (2025c) for details). According to Fowler (1986), transitivity patterns frame the ideology of the author, on the other hand, Hasan (1985) focuses on its role in coding, "who does what to whom, where, when, how, and why." Halliday (1994) identifies six process types: material (processes of doing), mental (perception, cognition, emotion), relational (being and relationships), verbal (saying), behavioral (physiological/psychological behavior), and existential (existence and occurrence). Each process type involves

specific participant roles, such as Actor and Goal in material processes or Sensor and Phenomenon in mental processes.

Employing this framework (Halliday, 1994), the study unveils how *transitivity* patterns in Intizar Hussain's *Jo Kho Gaye* are rendered in Rakhshanda Jalil's English translation *Those Who Are Lost*. The analysis depicts *semantic shifts* and ideological mediation utilizing translation strategies, thereby integrating Halliday's transitivity theory with translation studies to explore how meaning and ideology are negotiated across languages (See Figure 1).

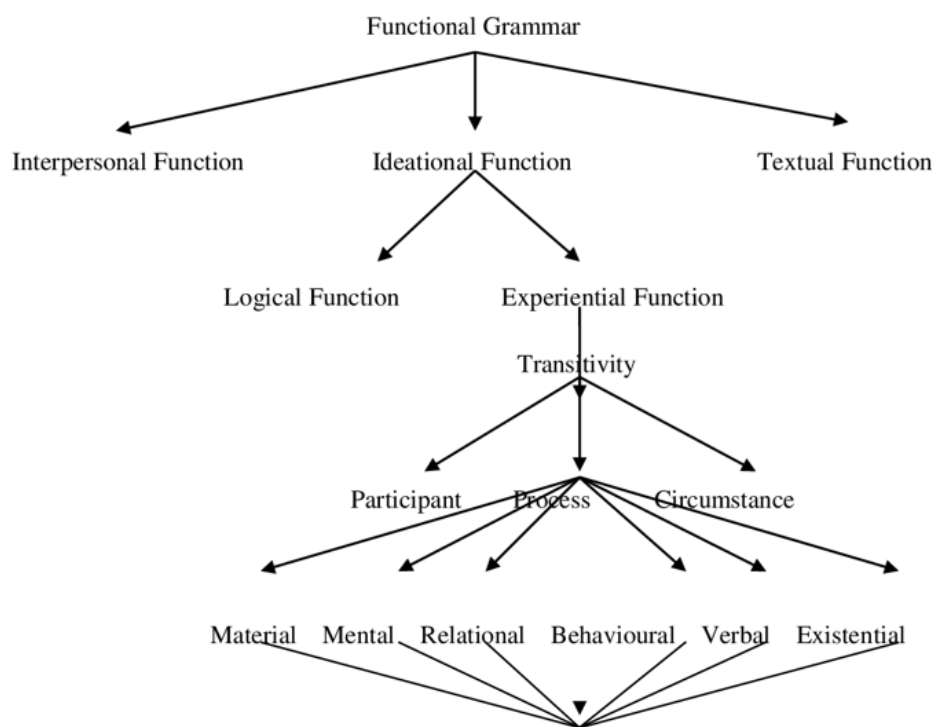


Figure 1. Transitivity Model adopted from Halliday (1994).

### Data Analysis

Translators employ a range of strategies to render meaning from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL), balancing fidelity to the original with comprehensibility and cultural resonance for the target audience. Scholars such as Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), Baker (1992), and Newmark (1988) have outlined various techniques that translators use to negotiate linguistic and cultural differences. In the translation of Intizar Hussain's *Jo Kho Gaye* into English (*Those Who Are Lost*) by Rakhshanda Jalil, several strategies were observed, including translation by neutral word, cultural substitution, loan word, paraphrasing, omission, and equivalence. Translation by Neutral Word involves replacing a source text item with a less expressive or more general term in the target text (Newmark, 1988). For example, the Urdu verb *thathka* was translated as "stopped suddenly," which neutralizes the culturally specific connotation of the original.

### Paraphrasing Strategy

Paraphrasing, defined by Baker (1992) as restating meaning in different words, was frequently employed. For instance, *aakhir challawa tou nahi tha ke gaib ho geya* was expanded into "He is a man, not a phantasm, that he can disappear like this," demonstrating how the translator elaborated the concise Urdu expression into a longer English construction. Similarly, *kya kheyal hai yeh kutte ke bhonkne ki awaaz nahi hai* was paraphrased as "Listen... what do you make of it? Isn't it the sound of a barking dog?", with the translator shifting the declarative form into an interrogative for stylistic effect.

### Loan Word Translation Strategy

Loan Word Translation (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995) was used when culturally specific terms were retained in the TL, such as *Mota Jhota*, a type of grain, which was borrowed directly without adaptation.

### Omission Strategy

Omission, a strategy noted by Baker (1992) as common in literary translation, was applied to condense repetition or remove elements deemed unnecessary for the TL audience. For example, *uss ka yun yakayak gaib ho jana...* repeated three times in the ST was reduced to “His sudden disappearance... and he fell silent” in the TT, omitting both repetition and part of the clause. Similarly, *tu? Sab ne chonk kar usse dekha* was shortened to “You? They were shocked,” with the omission of “looked at him.”

### Equivalence Strategy

Equivalence refers to conveying the same meaning and effect across languages (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995). In *zakhmi ser wala hansa*, the translator rendered “The man with the wounded head laughed,” a literal word-for-word translation that preserved semantic equivalence.

### Cultural Substitution

Cultural Substitution replaces culturally specific items with TL equivalents that produce similar resonance (Newmark, 1988). For example, *ungaliyon mein tasbih girdish kar rahi thi* was translated as “His fingers were telling the beads,” substituting the culturally specific *tasbih* with a more familiar English expression.

Overall, Jalil’s translation demonstrates a nuanced application of strategies, with paraphrasing and omission being the most frequently employed. This aligns with Baker’s (1992) observation that paraphrasing is often necessary to achieve functional equivalence, while omission reflects pragmatic adaptation to TL norms. The use of loan words and cultural substitution further illustrates the translator’s negotiation between fidelity to the Urdu text and accessibility for English readers, a balance emphasized by Bassnett (2014) and Tymoczko (2007) in their discussions of literary translation as cultural mediation.

## Results and Discussion

The comparative analysis of Intizar Hussain’s *Jo Kho Gaye* (ST) and Rakhshanda Jalil’s English translation *Those Who Are Lost* (TT) reveals disparities in the quantity and distribution of verbs and process types. As Halliday (1994) explains, transitivity analysis identifies how meaning is constructed through six process types—material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential—each encoding different dimensions of human experience.

Table 1. Corpus table.

Sr. No	Text	Total Verbs
1	Source Text (ST)	892
2	Target Text (TT)	997

Table 1 shows that the ST contains 892 verbs, while the TT expands this number to 997, reflecting an increase of 105 verbs. This expansion suggests that the translator employed strategies that elaborated or restructured clauses, consistent with Baker’s (1992) observation that paraphrasing and restructuring often increase textual length in translation.

Table 2. Verb processes and percentages in target text (TT).

Sr. No	Process Type	Frequency	Percentage
1	Material	348	39.01%
2	Mental	145	16.25%
3	Verbal	146	16.36%

4	Relational	238	26.68%
5	Behavioral	9	1.00%
6	Existential	6	0.67%
7	Total	892	100%

Tables 1 and 2 present the distribution of process types. In both texts, material processes dominate (39.01% in ST; 40.12% in TT), highlighting the emphasis on observable actions and interactions between characters. This supports Fowler's (1986) claim that material processes often foreground the narrative's realism and physicality. Relational processes occupy second place in both texts (26.68% in ST; 28.38% in TT), underscoring the importance of relationships and states of being in Hussain's narrative style.

Differences emerge in the ranking of mental and verbal processes. In the ST, verbal processes (16.36%) slightly outnumber mental processes (16.25%), whereas in the TT, mental processes (14.44%) surpass verbal processes (14.24%). This shift suggests that the translator emphasized internal cognition over dialogue, aligning with Hasan's (1985) view that transitivity choices can reshape the ideological framing of a text.

Behavioral and existential processes remain marginal in both texts, though the TT shows a notable increase in existential processes (2% compared to 0.67% in ST). This indicates that Jalil introduced more instances of existence or occurrence, possibly to adapt the narrative to English stylistic norms. Such adjustments resonate with Newmark's (1988) argument that translators often modify minor process types to achieve naturalness in the TL.

Table 3. Process differences between ST and TT.

Sr. No	Process Type	ST Frequency	TT Frequency	Difference
1	Material	348	400	+52
2	Mental	145	144	-1
3	Verbal	146	142	-4
4	Relational	238	283	+45
5	Behavioral	9	8	-1
6	Existential	6	20	+14

Tables 3 and 4 highlight the numerical and percentage differences. Material processes increased by 52 instances in the TT, while relational processes rose by 45. Conversely, verbal processes decreased by four, and behavioral processes by one. The most striking difference lies in existential processes, which increased by 14 instances in the TT. These variations, though quantitatively modest, are qualitatively significant, reflecting deliberate translation strategies rather than random shifts.

Table 4. Percentage differences between ST and TT.

Sr. No	Process Type	ST Percentage	TT Percentage	Difference
1	Material	39.01%	40.12%	+1.11%
2	Mental	16.25%	14.44%	-1.81%
3	Verbal	16.36%	14.24%	-2.12%
4	Relational	26.68%	28.38%	+1.70%
5	Behavioral	1.00%	0.80%	-0.20%
6	Existential	0.67%	2.00%	+1.33%

Overall, the analysis shows that Jalil largely preserved Hussain's narrative style, maintaining the dominance of material and relational processes. Minor differences in mental, verbal, and existential processes can be attributed to linguistic and cultural differences between Urdu and English. This finding aligns with Bassnett (2014) and Tymoczko (2007), who argue that translation inevitably involves negotiation between fidelity to the source text and adaptation to the target culture. Thus, Jalil's translation demonstrates both fidelity to Hussain's stylistic choices and pragmatic adaptation to English readership.

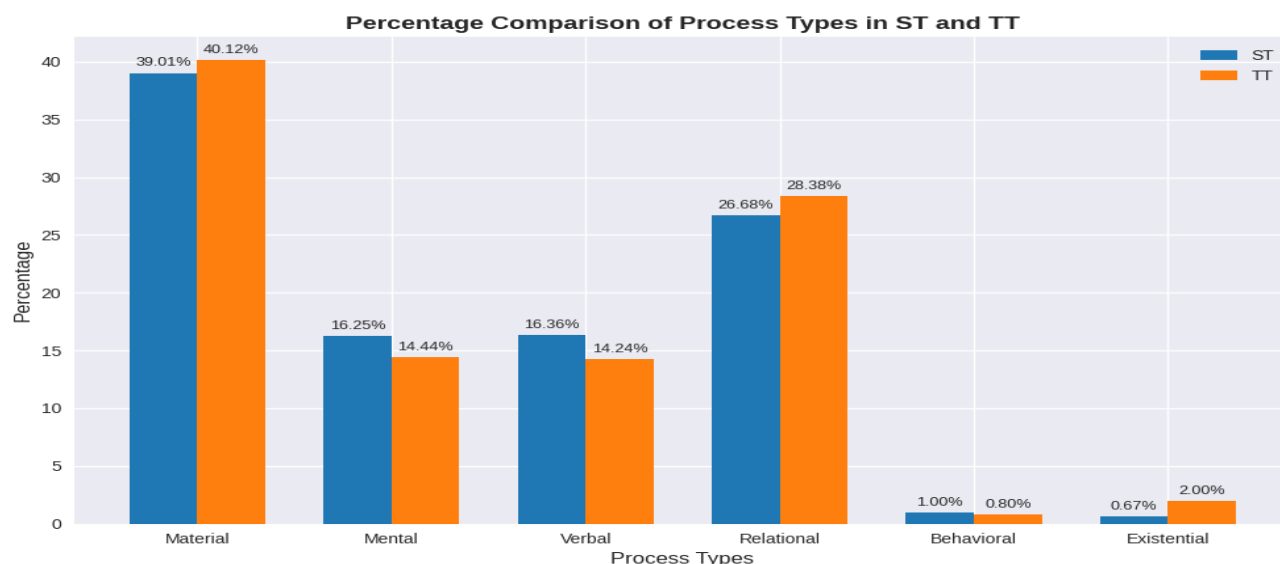


Figure 2. Percentage comparison of process types in ST and TT.

The analysis of Intizar Hussain's *Jo Kho Gaye* and its English translation *Those Who Are Lost* demonstrates that differences in the use of process types can partially resist the transfer of meaning across languages (See Figure 2). The findings reveal that the material process is dominant in both the source text (ST) and target text (TT), though with notable variations in frequency. The relational process emerges as the second most frequent in both texts, again with slight differences in distribution. Importantly, all six process types identified by Halliday (1994)—material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential—are present in both ST and TT, indicating that the translator did not omit any category of process entirely (Niaz & Ali, 2023; Saram et al., 2023).

Quantitative analysis showed that the TT contained more verbs overall (997) compared to the ST (892), suggesting that the translator expanded certain clauses, particularly through material and relational processes. This aligns with Hasan's (1985) observation that transitivity patterns encode "who does what to whom, where, when, how, and why," and that shifts in these patterns can reshape the ideological framing of a text. Similar findings have been reported by Fowler (1986), who argued that transitivity choices are not neutral but reflect the worldview of the author and, in translation, the interpretive stance of the translator (Jamil et al., 2025).

In terms of translation strategies, Rakhshanda Jalil employed paraphrasing, omission, equivalence, loan word translation, and cultural substitution. Among these, paraphrasing and omission were the most frequently used techniques. This is consistent with Baker's (1992) claim that paraphrasing is often necessary to achieve functional equivalence when direct lexical transfer is not possible, and with Leech and Short's (2007) emphasis on stylistic foregrounding, where omission or restructuring can alter the stylistic rhythm of the text. Previous studies in literary translation, such as Bassnett (2014) and Tymoczko (2007), have similarly highlighted the role of paraphrasing and cultural substitution in mediating meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Overall, the results confirm that while the translator preserved the presence of all six process types, the quantitative differences and strategic choices—particularly paraphrasing and omission—produced semantic and stylistic shifts. These findings support earlier scholarship that views translation as both a linguistic and ideological act, where transitivity analysis provides a systematic framework for evaluating translation quality and stylistic mediation.

## Conclusions

This study has demonstrated that language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a representation of human cognition and experience. While philosophers such as Kant argue that authentic recognition of the world is ultimately unattainable, literary style provides a window into the author's perception of reality, shaped by personal rhythm and lived experience. Through Halliday's transitivity model, the analysis revealed how Intizar Hussain's *Jo Kho Gaye* and Rakhshanda Jalil's English translation *Those Who Are Lost* encode meaning differently through the selection of processes and verbs. The source text contained 892 verbs, while the target text expanded this number to 997, reflecting deliberate shifts in material and relational processes. These variations, though quantitatively modest, were qualitatively significant, indicating conscious translation strategies that mediate meaning and ideology. By applying a systematic and scientific methodology, the research confirmed that transitivity analysis offers a reliable framework for assessing translation quality. It provides linguistic evidence that supports interpretation, enabling readers to understand how characters' actions and experiences are represented across texts. The findings suggest that both author and translator adopt a materialist perspective, yet articulate it differently, underscoring the nuanced role of translation strategies in shaping meaning. Ultimately, this study highlights the value of combining quantitative and qualitative approaches within Systemic Functional Linguistics to evaluate stylistic and ideological mediation in translation. It is hoped that future research will build upon this model to further advance multidisciplinary inquiry into the complex relationship between language, cognition, and translation.

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