

A Transitivity Analysis of Miss Brill's Mind Style in *Miss Brill*

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Abstract: Katherine Mansfield, a British female writer, was a bright star in English Literature World in the 1920s. She was famous for her short novels written in unique style all around the world. Mansfield had a good command of depicting the trivia of life and describing delicate changes of human beings' emotions, especially women's sensitive and exquisite feelings at the bottom of their hearts. *Miss Brill*, written in 1920s, was a classic of this kind of short novels. This paper will explore Miss Brill's mind style by transitivity analysis of the novel and further reveal her social marginalization. Through analyzing Miss Brill's activities on Sunday, it is founded that Miss Brill's mind style mainly has changed from an outsider of social activities to an observer of social activities, an imaginary participant of social activities, and finally to a social abandonee. At the same time, loneliness penetrates all through Miss Brill's mind style.

Keywords: *Miss Brill; Transitivity analysis; Mind style; Social identity*

1. Introduction

Katherine Mansfield, a New Zealand-born English writer, is known as the master of the 20th century British short story and is famous for her prominent short stories. All of Katherine Mansfield's works were collected in *Bliss and Other Stories*(1920), *The Garden Party and Other Stories*(1920), *The Dove's Nest and Other Stories*(1922) and so on, in which the most famous short stories are *Miss Brill*, *Prelude*, *The Garden Party*, *The Doll's House*, *The Fly* and so on. Mansfield is almost devoted her whole life to short story writing, and she forms her unique style. What differentiates her from others and makes her the unique master among writers is "that her depict of the trivia of life and description of women's delicate changes of human beings' emotions at the bottom of their hearts"^[1]. *Miss Brill* is one of Katherine Mansfield's short stories^[2]. The novel mainly tells a story about Miss Brill, who lived alone and lonely in France. She made a living by working as a tutor and reading newspapers for the people. In order to drive out the sadness and loneliness from her inner heart, she went to the park every Sunday observing others' life, conversations and behaviors. She made her effort to console herself through sharing life of others. Unfortunately, the bad words from a young couple not only hurt her deeply, but also destroyed the happiness, harmony and delight of life in her imagination. Finally, she returned to the cruel reality.

Transitivity is a systemic system of "realizing ideational function and conveys human's experience to real world and inner world through several processes"^[3]. It is composed of six types of transitivity processes, namely material process, mental process, relational process, behavioral processes, verbal process and existential process. Material process is a process of doing and happening. Mental process is a process of sensing. Relational process is a process of being and having. Behavior process is a process of physiological and psychological behavior. Verbal process is a process of saying. Existential process is a process of existing. Mind style refers to the way "in which consistent linguistic patterns in a text can create a particular world view, a characteristic way of perceiving, understanding and conceptualizing the textual world"^{[4][5]}. In this paper, it refers to the way Miss Brill processes the relationship between her and the society and Miss Brill's emotional changes.

Because of easy language and plots, readers may not taste and touch the sentimental and subtle inner changes of Miss Brill and get ideas of Mansfield's concern for women and women's social status at first. However, seen through transitivity, Miss Brill's inner thoughts and feelings can be revealed in one way or another. Therefore, this paper will particularly analyze the transitivity system of the novel, through which Miss Brill's mind style is studied.

2. Transitivity Analysis of Miss Brill's Mind Style

Miss Brill mainly tells a story about Miss Brill who is a British woman but lives alone in France. According to the different places that Miss Brill goes to and Miss Brill's different behaviors, the story is divided into three episodes. The first episode, paragraph one, is about Miss Brill's making preparations at home before going to the park. The second episode, from paragraph 2 to paragraph 16, is the description of Miss Brill's behaviors and activities in Jardins Publiques. The third episode, from paragraph 17 to paragraph 18, mainly talks about Miss Brill's returning home in despair. The language and the plot of the story are easy to understand, but the changes of Miss Brill's mind style are hidden behind them. There are 1910 words in this novel, which comprises 118 sentences. Among them, there is just 25 sentences related directly to Miss Brill, and these sentences include 40 transitivity processes, which are the clues or the key to analyze Miss Brill's mind style. In a way, they vividly reflect the changes of Miss Brill's feelings and emotions in her inner world. The following table is an overview of transitivity processes about Miss Brill.

Table 1: Frequencies of Transitivity Types of the Twenty-five Sentences

Process Number \ stage	Material Process	Mental Process	Relational Process	Verbal Process	Total
Episode 1	10(25%)	4 (10%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	14(35%)
Episode 2	5 (12.5%)	12(30%)	3(7.5%)	0(0%)	20(50%)
Episode 3	4 (10%)	2(5%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	6(15%)
Total	19 (47.5%)	18(45%)	3(7.5%)	0(0%)	40(100%)

According to Halliday's transitivity system, there are six types of transitivity processes, namely material process, mental process, relational process, verbal process, behavioral process and existential process. The former three are main types of process. Transitivity contributes to characterizing people's inner activities. Therefore, the author is going to explore Miss Brill's mind style through transitivity analysis of the selected 25 sentences.

It can be seen from Table 1 that material processes account for 47.5%, which comprises the chief proportion of the transitivity processes. It illustrates that Miss Brill endeavors to do a lot of things on Sunday's activities. In the meantime, material processes of episode one take up the most percentage of all material processes, which shows Miss Brill does many actions to prepare for going to the park. What take up the second highest percentage of transitivity processes are mental processes, accounting for 45% of the total number in the story. It tells that Miss Brill thinks a lot in the whole story. It is also clear that mental processes of episode two account for the most of overall mental processes, taking up 30%, which indicates Miss Brill's rich inner activities in the park. What take up the lowest percentage are relational processes, accounting for 7.5%, which implies that there is few relational processes to describe Miss Brill's social identity. Among three episodes, episode two accounts for the most proportion of all processes, and material processes, mental processes and relational processes appear simultaneous for the first time. That is to say, in the park, Miss Brill not only does something, but also has exuberant thoughts and emotions. There is no verbal process all around the whole story, which indicates that none communicate with Miss Brill at home and in the park. Of course, as a stranger in a new environment, Miss Brill has no friends and relatives, so it is impossible for her to communicate with others. This is why that no verbal process is mentioned in the whole story.

As for behavior process, it is grammatically more like "doing". Likewise, because the number of behavioral processes in *Miss Brill* is few and behavioral process is similar with material process, they are classified into one group in the paper. At the same time, Miss Brill, a British, who lives alone in France, has no sense of social identity and she does not belong to any group, so she is never identified by others and there is no other words to describe her attribute except three relational processes created by herself in her imagination.

The more detailed transitivity analysis of these 25 sentences in different episodes will be given in the following parts so as to demonstrate Miss Brill's mind style.

2.1. Transitivity Analysis in Episode One

Episode one mainly talks about that Miss Brill makes preparations at home for going to the Jardins Publiques. The weather is brilliantly fine, Miss Brill is glad, and she decides to wear her fur to go out, so she tends her fur carefully. The following table is detailed analysis of transitivity processes of this

episode respectively.

Table 2: Material Processes in Episode One

	Actor	Process	Goal	Circumstance
1	Miss Brill	put up	her hand	
2	Miss Brill	touch	her fur	
3	Miss Brill	had taken out of	it(her fur)	out of box ,that afternoon
4	Miss Brill	had shaken out	the moth-powder	
5	Miss Brill	had given a good brush	it(her fur)	
6	Miss Brill	had rubbed	the life	back into the dim little eyes
7	Miss Brill	could have taken off	it(her fur)	
8	Miss Brill	could have laid	it (her fur)	on her lap
9	Miss Brill	could have stroked	it (her fur)	
10	She(Miss Brill)	breathed		something light and sad

The table 2 shows that there are 10 material processes taking up the main proportion among two types of process. In these material processes, the first six processes are effective actions done by Miss Brill. Processes 7-9 are combined with subjective mood, which implies that Miss Brill wants to do these things, but she does not do them actually. Process 10 is Miss Brill's physiological behavior, which does not pose any effect on others. Therefore, Miss Brill's actions from 7 to 10 are invalid to the world around her. As for goals, there are nine goals in all. Among them, six goals are "her fur", and two goals are "moth-powder" and "life", but these two goals are closely related to "her fur." From the above, it is easy to see all of Miss Brill's interaction is limited between her and "the fur", which illustrates the significance of "the fur" to Miss Brill. The "fur" is her company, together with whom she goes to the park on every Sunday.

According to Systemic Functional Linguistics (2008), material process indicates "doing something". From the processes "had taken out of its box", "shaken out the moth-powder", "had given it a good brush", "had rubbed the life back into dim little eyes", it is evident that Miss Brill takes good care of her fur—her only company, which indicates that Miss Brill makes full preparations for going to the park. Likewise, these four processes also reflect that Miss Brill pays much attention to daily activities on Sunday from an implied aspect. The circumstance "out of box" demonstrates that Miss Brill loves and cherishes her "fur" very much, so she does not throw it on the sofa or bed but puts it into the box, protecting it from being dirty or being destroyed. Besides, among these eight goals, six goals are "her fur", and the rest two goals are "moth-powder" and "life", which are closely related with "her fur." Katherine Mansfield does not adopt more precise expression instead of repeating "the fur" on purpose in order to highlight the importance of "the fur" to Miss Brill. The fourth goal "moth-powder" implies that the time of the story is in late autumn or early winter. There is no doubt that the first function of "the fur", a scarf, is to prevent Miss Brill from cold days.

Table 3: Mental Process in Episode One

	Sensor	Process	Phenomenon	Circumstance
1	Miss Brill	was glad		
2	She	felt like	little rogue	
3	She	felt	a tingling	in her hands and arms
4	She	supposed	a tingling	that came from walking

As for mental processes, in this episode, Miss Brill is staying at home, so she does not have any relations with outside. Therefore, her changing emotions and feelings mainly attributes to her own-delight of going to the park and physical pain from the old age. At the same time, busy preparations left her little space to think. That is why mental processes are few in this episode.

Although there are only 4 mental processes in Table 3, they vividly emphasize Miss Brill's subjective consciousness and sensing. The mental process "Miss Brill was glad" shows Miss Brill's happiness for going to the park. In another process "Miss Brill felt like little rogue", "Little rogue" means a cute little person, but in the story "little rogue" refers to "the fur", which is absolutely personified by Miss Brill, which delivers her happiness brought by "the fur" and which implies that the role of "the fur" has outweighed a cold-preventing scarf. More importantly, the second vital function of "the fur" is a tool of Miss Brill's emotional sustenance. When Miss Brill becomes content, the fur

appears as a secret friend that Miss Brill can share her happiness with it. As Miss Brill's only company, when Miss Brill gets sad, the fur provides her with comfort, eagerness and hope for the life. In the third and fourth mental processes "She felt a tingling in her hands and arms, but that came from walking, she supposed", "felt" shows that the "tingling" is Miss Brill's subjective feelings. Actually, it is uncertain whether there is "tingling" or not. The word "supposes" means pretending that something is true or taking something as a fact. Miss Brill attributes the pain of her hands and arms to walking subjectively. Actually, Miss Brill is still staying at home, and she does not walk. Therefore, Miss Brill makes an excuse for her pain, which illustrates that Miss Brill can be aware of the physical pain because of the old age on her own, but she tries to avoid this fact. The sadness of her inner heart is vividly characterized.

Verbal process is a process of saying. In this plot, there is no verbal communication or conversation between Miss Brill and others. On the contrary, all of activities are interaction between her and the fur, which presents us that Miss Brill is in a lonely and isolated state. In addition, Miss Brill's loneliness can also be reflected on relational process. Relational process means a process of being. The French word "Jardins Publiques" implies that Miss Brill, a British, lives in France as an immigrant or a foreigner, so she does not belong to any community or group in essence and she is never identified by others and by the society. This explains why there is no relational process in the plot to describe Miss Brill's social identity convincingly and reveals Miss Brill's loneliness further.

From above discussion, it is concluded that Miss Brill, as a foreigner, is isolated in an exotic environment and "the fur" is her only company. Going to the park on every Sunday opens a door for her to involve in the new environment. However, although she endeavors to adapt to the new environment, she cannot change her lonely state at the bottom of her inner heart, because she cannot change her identity of an outsider.

2.2. *Transitivity Analysis in Episode Two*

Episode two is description about Miss Brill's wandering in the Jardins Publiques. In this episode, Miss Brill's mind style changes from an observer of social activities to an imaginary participant of social activities. When she arrives at the park, the first thing she does is to observe the old couple. Unfortunately, they do not have any conversation, which makes Miss Brill depressed. Then, she changes her observation target, and begins to watch people with different ages and different backgrounds. While she is obsessed in observing, a dog appears and interrupts her train of thought. Suddenly, she imagines that all of people including her are actors or actress acting on the stage and she is a part of performance. This kind of subjective imagination makes her feel excited.

Compared with the previous episode, it is clear that the total number of transitivity processes have increased from 14 to 20 in this episode. At the same time, it is also worthy of noticing that material processes have decreased to 5, mental processes have increased to 12 and that relational processes appear 3 times. The sharply reduced number of material process shows she almost does nothing as a stranger in the park. However, she meets various kinds of people, whose behaviors have strong influence on her emotions while she is observing them. That is why mental processes increase strikingly in this episode. Relational processes mark the Miss Brill's start to build relations to other people. There is no doubt that mental processes and relational processes are the most essential and vivid part to catch Miss Brill's mind style in this scene. The following is the detailed explanation of transitivity processes respectively in this episode.

Table 4: *Material Process in Episode Two*

	Actor	Process	Goal	Circumstance
1	She	lifted	her hand	
2	She	smiled		
3	She	smiled		more brightly
4	She	discovered	what it was that made it so exciting	
5	She	nearly laughed out		

In Table 4 all of material processes are invalid, but they reflect Miss Brill's eagerness to communicate with others. In the process "She lifted her head." The actor is "she" and the "goal" is "her head", which illustrates that Miss Brill is the doer of the action and the receiver of the action, so her physical activity is limited on her own and invalid. Another process "She smiled" is Miss Brill's physiological behavior, and expresses her happiness of observing others. The process "She discovered

what it was that made it so exciting” is Miss Brill’s response when a dog appears suddenly disturbs the tranquility of Miss Brill as an observer. The first “It” refers to Miss Brill thinks that “They were all on the stage. They weren’t only the audience, not only looking; they were acting.” The process “discover” is not an actual action of discovery, but Miss Brill’s subjective imagination and feelings, because what she previously observes are not real actors or actresses except the band, but just a variety of ordinary people, and the place where she is staying is not a stage but a park. “She nearly laughed out” delivers her excitement when she imagines her as an actress, but “nearly” shows she does not laugh actually.

Table 5: Mental Process in Episode Two

	Sensor	Process	Phenomenon	Circumstance
1	She	was sure	it would be repeated	It was.
2	Miss Brill	looked forward to	the conversation	
3	She	thought	she had become really quite expert	as listening as though she didn't listen
4	She	wanted to shake	her	
5	Miss Brill	had often noticed	there was something funny about nearly all of them	
6	Miss Brill	didn't know	whether to admire that or not	
7	Miss Brill	wondered		the ermine toque turned...
8	She	enjoyed	it	
9	She	loved	sitting here, watching it all	
10	Miss Brill	glanced at	the old couple	sideways
11	Miss Brill	looked	at all other members of the company	eyes filled with tears, smiling
12	She	didn't know	what they understand	we understand, she thought

According to Halliday, “Within the general class of ‘mental’ clauses, there are four different subtypes of sensing: perceptive, cognitive, desiderative and emotive” (Halliday 208). In Table 5 There are two mental processes with respect to “perceptive”: “Miss Brill had often noticed there was something funny about nearly all of them” and “She glanced, sideways, at the old couple”. The two processes reveal Miss Brill’s loneliness and her eagerness to communicate with others again in an indirect way. Miss Brill is lonely and she is extremely eager to talk with people in her inner heart, so she pays much attention to listening to and noticing others. Second, from the perspective of “cognitive”, the process “She was sure that it would be repeated. It was” describes Miss Brill’s inner activities and her response while observing the band. “It” refers to “Now there came a little ‘flutey’-very pretty-a little chain of bright drops.” “sure” shows her frequency of coming to the park and her confidence for listening to the changing rhythms of “flutey”. However, in fact, this confidence is the cover of her loneliness, because generally most of people come to the park for making an appointment, playing with kids or talking with friends, and no one except Miss Brill focuses this “flutey” repeated every Sunday. Miss Brill is single all the time and she has no chance to talk with others, so the one of things she can do is to listening to the sound of the band. These two mental processes “She thought she had become really quiet expert as listening as though she did not listen” and “Miss Brill wondered the ermine toque turned...” reveal Miss Brill’s loneliness. She pays full attention to the music and even thinks that she was expertise, because none talks with her and what she can do is to listen to music. In light of “desiderative”, the process “She wanted to shake her” delivers that although Miss Brill is eager to shake the wife of an Englishman, she does not do it actually. What she can do is still to look at them. Another process “Miss Brill looked forward to the conversation” reflects Miss Brill’s eagerness to communicate with others directly. Last, in terms of “emotive” process, “She loved sitting here, watching it all” directly points out Miss Brill’s identity of an observer.

However, there is no verbal process in the episode, which tells that the communication is difficult for her to achieve. What she can do is still to watch various kinds of people. Therefore, as so far, Miss Brill does not perform any effectual actions and she is at a state of watching social activities all the time. Her loneliness is exposed thoroughly through this kind of state.

In Table 6, the three relational processes, “She was part of the performance”, “She had a part” and “She was on the stage” are all imaginary social identity created in Miss Brill’s imagination. These relational processes mark the beginning of Miss Brill as an imaginary participant. She imagines that she

is taking part in the social activities, but there is not real performance and stage at all for her in the park. However, the imaginary social identity reveals her isolated state in a high degree, because when she fails to communicate with others and pursue her value of existence in real life, she is trapped in imagination.

Table 6: Relational Process in Episode Two

	Token	process	value	circumstance
1	she	was	part of the performance	
2	She	had	a part	
3	She	was	on the stage	

In a word, in this episode, three kinds of transitivity processes characterize Miss Brill's mind style of an observer at first, and then turn her into an imaginary participant. At the same time, Miss Brill's loneliness penetrates this episode.

2.3 Transitivity Analysis in Episode Three

Episode three narrates that Miss Brill become deeply depressed when she and her precious fur were laughed by a young couple. Therefore, she chooses to go home with deep sorrow. There is no doubt that this laughter is a cruel shock for her. In this part, 4 material processes retake up the main proportion like episode one, and there are just 2 mental processes. The following is the detailed explanation of transitivity processes respectively in this episode.

Table 7: Material Processes in Episode Three

	Actor	process	Goal	Circumstance
1	she	sat down	on the red eiderdown	for a long time
2	she	unclasped	the necklet (the fur)	quickly
3	She	laid	it(necklet)	quickly, without looking ,inside
4	She	put	the lid	

Compared with material processes in episode one, the material processes in this episode make a striking contrast with them. First, as for goals in Table 7, 6 goals are "the fur" in episode one, but in episode three, only two goals are "fur." In addition, the processes "stroked", "took out of the box", "gave it a good brush" and "rubbed the life back" make a bright contrast with "unclasped" and "laid". It shows that Miss Brill's attitude towards the "fur" changes from love to indifference. The circumstance "on the lap" is compared with "without looking" clearly, which indicates that the laughter from the young couple is a cruel shock for her, which cannot be softened by the "fur", and Miss Brill's feelings and emotions change a lot. Before going to park, she is full of expectation, but now, she is depressed.

Table 8: Mental Process in Episode Three

	Sensor	Process	Phenomenon	Circumstance
1	She	thought	he heard something crying	
2	She	heard	something crying	

What's more, in Table 8 Miss Brill's despair is absolutely exposed by the mental process. In the process "She thought she heard something crying", "thought" means assuming something true and it emphasizes Miss Brill's subjective feelings. It suggests that Miss Brill is uncertain whether there is real crying or not. If there is no real crying, the crying heard by Miss Brill is from Miss Brill's despairing heart. If there is crying indeed, it must belong to Miss Brill. It is because no one except herself in her home. Not only does she is aware that she is crying, but also she is crying really. Miss Brill is desperate deeply in her inner heart.

As a foreigner, facing harsh environment of existence, she is entirely abandoned physically and mentally. She is reduced to a social abandonee thoroughly.

3. Conclusion

Katherine Mansfield, as a representative of modernism, is known to characterize women's feelings and emotions of their inner world. In the meantime, she is admired and praised by other writers because she is much concerned about women and their social status. Miss Brill is one of her classical works.

The paper mainly explores Miss Brill's mind style. In the first episode, material processes show Miss Brill's good care of her "fur"-her only company. As an outsider of social activities, going to the park provides her with an optimal opportunity to involve in the new environment, so she makes full preparations to go to park. Miss Brill is hopeful and eager to adapt to the new environment. In episode two, in the park, Miss Brill meets various kinds of people, and mental processes, material processes and relational processes show her strong eagerness of communication, temporary happiness of observing others, excitement of imaging her as an actress taking part in social activities and loneliness of inner heart. She is both an observer and an imaginary participant of social activities. In episode three, after being hurt by the young couple, material processes and mental processes show her indifferent attitude to her "fur" and reveal Miss Brill's thorough despair after turning into a social abandonee. Through the analysis of Miss Brill's mind style, the paper finds that the exclusion of foreign culture and the indifference of people in French town are main reasons that make Miss Brill fail to establish social identity.

To sum up, this paper reveals Miss Brill's mind style through transitivity analysis. It intends to call for people's concern and sympathy to Miss Brill and arouse people's attention to women and their social status. Because of limitation of the author's ability, the paper just selects transitivity processes directly related to Miss Brill to analyze Miss Brill's mind style. It is not sufficient enough.

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