

**Transitivity As a Means of Communication: A Stylistic Study of Langston Hughes's Selected Early Poems**

Khalid Qays Abed  
Department of English  
College of Education for Humanities  
University of Anbar  
Anbar-Iraq

Mushatq AbdulHaleem Mohammed  
Department of English  
College of Arts,  
Al-Iraqia University  
Baghdad-Iraq

**Abstract:**

*It is one of the distinctive features of Langston Hughes's (1902-1967) poetry to wield the many types of transitivity for many poetic demands. This paper examines the functions of different processes of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics theory in creating the poetic voice in Langston Hughes's three early poems: "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" (1921), "Mother to Son" (1922), and "I, Too" (1926). The present paper is also an endeavour to analyse and interpret these three poems for they deal with the essential themes of the negritude, showing the poet's awareness of the stylistic features of simplicity, spontaneity and flexibility of poetic diction. Transitivity reflected in Hughes' poetry will be stylistically parsed as a communication utility on one hand, and as for their implicatures on the other. Through examining Hughes' selected poems, it has been concluded that he employs some materialistic and mental processing to prove the very noteworthy clues supporting the reader's comprehension of the five W's of who/what does what/whom then when relative to the individuals of the poems.*

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**Introduction**

The exploration of text linguistics—a branch of linguistics that describes texts as communication systems—indicates that the analysis of a literary text involves many controversial factors. Such factors identify and classify the elements of language being utilized by the author. Text linguistics shows the hidden meanings in the text through different processes as well.

Style, as a linguistic term, is a variation in language use which can be recognized as to certain linguistic features called stylistic features. Hence, what distinguishes style is the selection of items and their patterns as stylistic features which are determined partially by the demands of genre, form, and theme. Stylistics, in turn, is defined by Crystal (2003, 440) as a branch of linguistics dealing with the features of situationally distinctive uses of language.

There is a boundary between stylistic analysis and literary interpretation. The former is defined as a procedure that aims at studying the linguistic means and devices of a given text; the message, topic, and content are not the main focus. Saliently, the approach of stylistic analysis can equally be applied to the study of language of a literary and non-literary text. According to this point of view, the literary interpretation is a procedure applied exclusively to a literary text to appreciate and explicate its theme, content, literary qualities. It also

decodes the author's cues of language and establishes principles for accounting the particular choices made by the individual (Missikova 2003, 17).

Doing stylistics enriches one's ways of thinking about language. With the full array of language models, Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics can be taken on in identifying the ideology or mind-style intended behind the text. Linguistic choices in transitivity have a fundamental role in clarifying and extrapolating the implicit dominant ideologies drawn in processes of the clauses.

## **2. Systemic Functional Linguistics**

In his *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (1985), Halliday purveys the idea that language achieves two major functions: ideational and interpersonal. Ideational function is utilized to express one's perceptions and experiences of the world. Interpersonal one is exploited by individuals to indulge themselves in the communicative events. Both events depend on a third one: textual function by which one can construct his meaning socially and culturally (Azar and Yazdchi : 2012, 2). After propounding the main functions of language, it is noteworthy that the states of the major systems of the clause are known as mood (deriving from interpersonal), transitivity (deriving from ideational) and theme (deriving from textual). These systems reflect the semantic levels of analysis, being linked to the reality of context in any situation (Kress 1976, XIX).

## **3. Transitivity as a System**

Transitivity is defined as the manner in which a verb is related to the noun phrases in the clause structure. Traditional grammarians adopt purely syntactic description, in that whether the subject takes one or more objects (Trask 2007, 305). Within Systemic Functional Linguistics, the notion of transitivity has been greatly extended and generalized. Here, the term is understood as denoting the kind of activity or process expressed by a sentence, the number of participants involved and the manner in which they are involved. Again, according to Trask, transitivity clarifies how the semantic description as well as syntactic one are involved too (306).

By putting transitivity into action, one can encode her/his experience of processing as being important in the transmission of information (ideational). The importance of the analysis of sentence meanings lies in the fact that agency, state, and process seem to be basic categories in terms of which human beings present the world to themselves through language (Fowler

1996, 74). One thinks of the world firstly and then speaks and writes about it. Halliday (1985,101) furthers:

Our most power conception of reality is that consists of “going-on”.. . of doing, happening, feeling, being these goings-on are sorted out in the semantic system of the language, and expressed through the grammar of the clause . . . the clause evolved simultaneously in another grammatical function expressing the reflective, experiential aspects of meaning. This . . . is the system of TRANSITIVITY. Transitivity specifies the different types of process that are recognized in the language, and the structures by which they are expressed.

In other words, transitivity of clauses reflects a particular world-view or ideology implied in the text adopting the effect of the situation on linguistic behaviour. Along with this trend, Fowler (1986, 27) mentions that linguistic codes do not reflect reality neutrally; they interpret, organize, and classify the subjects of discourse. They also embody theories of how the world is arranged: world-views or ideologies.

Through writing about narratives, Henry James (1843-1916) once posed a pair of rhetorical questions: “what is character but the determination of incident?”“What is incident but the illustration of the character?” Consequently, the integration of the “character” and “incident” as a formula serves as a template for analysis of transitivity in the narrative as being concerned with transaction of events and actions. This mode refers to the way character is developed through and by semantic processes and participants embodied in narrative discourse. Character may, for instance, be determined by degree of influence on narrative incidents, by degree of active involvement in the momentum of the plot (Simpson 2004, 74).

In Simpson’s opinion, Halliday argues that the developments in the incidents are reflected in the character and they are mirrored in transitivity choices as transition of information required in decoding producer’s mind-style (75). In essence, the process is realized by the verb of the clause whereas the participants by the noun phrases of the same clause; adjectival and prepositional phrases realize the circumstances providing information about ‘how’, ‘when’, ‘where’ the action or process is done. The participants are necessarily humans or even animate; therefore, Halliday (1976, 160) propounds the term “participant entities” to be more accurate. Halliday (1994) proposes seven types of processes according to which the participants are labelled as cited below:

**a) Material Processes**

They are those in which something is done, expressed by action verbs, e.g. eat, go, give ... etc. This type requires two participants (except for the transferring process that requires three

participants): Actor (the subject) and Goal (logical direct object) (Iwamoto n.d., 70). Such processes also include four kinds: ‘doing’, ‘happening’, ‘causing’ and ‘transferring’. According to Downing and Lock (2006, 128) in the processes of ‘doing’, the action either extends to another participant or does not depend on the verb. The animate actor is called Agent, while the inanimate one is called Force. To Downing and Lock too, in the process of ‘transferring’, an Agent transfers an Affected participant to either a Recipient or Beneficiary. They also add that in the processes of ‘happening’ the Affected undergoes the happening.

#### **b) Mental Processes**

They are processes of feeling, thinking and perceiving, viewed as internalized process in contrast to externalized ones of doing. This type requires: subject as a Sensor or Experiencer and object as a Phenomenon (Halliday, 1994, 117). Mental processes, per se, can be classified into three kinds: of cognition (e.g. verbs of thinking, knowing, to name but few), of affection (verbs of liking, loving, and others), and perception (verbs of seeing, smelling...etc.). Grammatically, the Sensor can be recognized according to the voice: it is agent-sensor if the sentence is active voice and affected-sensor if it is passive one (118).

#### **c) Relational Processes**

They are concerned with the processes of being in the world of abstract relations, being in two categories:

A. Attributive Process: y is an attribute of x

B. Identifying Process: y is identity of x

In the attributive one, the logical subject is called “Carrier” and the object is “Attributive” whereas in identifying processes the subject is “Identified” and the object is “Identifying” (Halliday 1985, 115). More specifically, Downing and Lock (2006, 144) assert that the Attributive processes are of three-kind relations: Attributive, Circumstantial, and Possessive. In possessive structures the participants are known as the Possessor and the Possessed. In Identifying process the Identified is also called the Token and the Identifying is also called Identifier or Value or vice-versa.

#### **d) Behavioural Processes**

They refer to physiological and psychological like breathing, coughing, smiling . . . etc. They represent outer manifestations of inner workings, the acting out of processes of consciousness and psychological states (Halliday 1976, 55). Covertly, the one participant is called Behavior. According to the context in which they occur, the verbs also include two kinds of processes: involuntary (if they are followed by adverbs) and volitional (if they are not).

**e) Verbal Processes**

They are of saying as being concerned with expressing the relationship between ideas constructed human consciousness and the ideas enacted in a form of language (Halliday 1994: 107). According to Halliday (1994,140), this type of process includes the subject—Sayer—,Verbiage—the message directed to the object, and the object—Target—which is also called the Said, (a reported statement, a reported questioner a reported directive (order, request, etc.)If the clause includes the verb “tell,” a Recipient, the Addressee, should be added to the structure (Downing and Lock 2000, 151).

**f) Existential Processes**

They are related to the existence of entities. The participant which is expressed to exist is called Existent, being any kind of entity like human, thing abstraction, (countable and uncountable), or event. To Downing and Lock, the structures used tend to specify the quantification and/or the location of something. In most cases, the existential there is employed in the structures (153).

**g) Meteorological Processes.**

They are limited to the weather, starting with empty (it) (Azar and Yazdchi 2012, 3).

**4. Langston Hughes: An Advocate of Negritude**

Langston Hughes (1902-1967) has been appreciated by the critics as the brilliant figure who called for the rights of the blacks in America. He intends to severely criticize the whites as being oppressive and inequitable toward the Negroes. His writings, whether novels or poems, reflect the harsh experience of the Negroes who lived in the white American society. He also depicts them as the victims of discrimination who are deprived from the simplest rights of living. Thus, he is the advocate of “the ideology of blackness” as Raymond F. Betts states (1971, 1).

The experience of the blacks began when the white slaveholders realized that the Africans were brought to America in order to set off the huge mission of the constrained work of people, relying on the difference among races as the essence of their realization. They considered the bondage as a solution for the Negroes who were given inferiority. (Hussein 2008, 2). Moreover, the fact that the scientific progress which was initiated during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries relegated the blacks’ status. To Hussein, Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution showed that the blacks were unable to take part in the biological, social and cultural evolution. Thus, the anthropologists proved, on this basis, that the Negroes were inferior race since their physical shape was similar to the man-ape (3).

Hughes's unique experience was the reason of the success of his literary career. He devoted his life to call for the rights of the blacks whose utmost ambitions were self-realization and freedom. Through his memorable poems, he images their longing for proving their culture as a highbred and immemorial Afro-American people not inferior slaves. The emergence of such a daring voice, the history of the Negroes witnessed a watershed toward attaining freedom and independence.

Furthermore, Hughes has been carefully selected for his notable poetic voice through which he conveys his issue to the world. In many of his poems, he depicts peoples' lives vividly as impaired by the racial discrimination. The main function of his poems is to attract the reader's attention to the Afro-American wretched state in America. They reveal his awareness "of the strong thematic philosophical, and stylistic links between his poetry and Negritude literary canons" (Charles 1980, 88). Hughes's early poetry is written with spontaneous mood and simple Wordsworthian poetic diction to be read and understood by the public. He believes that lofty poetic diction should be eschewed because it does not suit to embody the poet's real experience to be felt and coexisted. Indeed, his early poetry mirrors such a pure experience he got through and makes his voice the representative of the Negroes to the world. Besides, Charles believes that Hughes's poetic process has been evolved through two steps:

... the rejection of the negative image of the blacks in western societies, and the assumption of a positive image. This Negritude motif of racial and cultural identity is one of the underpinnings of Langston Hughes's poetry which he establishes at the very start of his career. (89)

## **5. Applying Transitivity System on Hughes's Poems**

Transitivity has been a reliable tool in stylistics in the sense that it discovers how the producer encodes linguistic choices non-neutrally. Such choices will be so obvious through analysing three of Hughes's early poems.

### **5.1.1 "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"**

"The Negro Speaks of Rivers" (p23) is one of the early poems written by Langston Hughes in 1921. In this poem, Hughes employs various processes to describe his connection to his African roots, identity, and freedom through the poetic voice. Before delving into the poem analysis according to the aforementioned processes, it is essential to shed light on the title

itself. The title is applicable to the Mental Processes because of the verb “Speaks” which is written in the present tense to signify a current event or a revolutionary moment. The Sayer is “Negro” and the Target is “Rivers.” The word “Negro” is also a reference to the black community. Altogether, the title shows the close-fitting relationship between the Negro’s soul and the rivers expressed by the verbiage. It is also a reference to the Negro’s knowledge of these rivers and what they represent for him. Therefore, Hughes’s ideology will be explored in various processes.

### 5.1.2 Material Processes

Line five, “I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young,” (5) shows “bathed” as an action verb. The Actor is “I” and there is no Goal because the verb is intransitive here. In addition, “in the Euphrates when dawns were young,” is regarded as Circumstance: place and time. Moreover, the speaker refers timelessly to his black history being transferred to the Middle East. The indication to Euphrates—as one of the two great rivers beside Tigris in Mesopotamia—is a source of pride to the speaker who at least lived nearby such a “fertile soil [that] allowed its people not merely to survive, but to flourish, and western civilization began here along with western writing. Besides, according to Muslims, Jews, and Christians, the Garden of Eden existed nearby... .” (Chloe Bolan 2001, 204).

The first clause of line six, “I built my hut near the Congo,” (6) includes three participants linked by the action verb, “built.” “I” is Actor, “my hut” is Goal, while “near the Congo” is Circumstance. The speaker then moves to another river in the heart of Africa being, like all rivers, a sign for human existence and the cradle of civilization. The second clause in line seven, “and raised the pyramids above it,” (7) has the implicit Actor “I” to the verb “raised.” The Goal is “the pyramids” and the Circumstance is “above it.” Although the reference to the Nile has the same significance as the previous rivers, it is also a hint to Negroes’ slavery as being exploited in building the pyramids. Altogether, the clauses express ‘doing’ process.

**Table (1)**  
**Material process in “The Negro Speaks of Rivers”**

Circumstance	Goal	Process	Actor
“in the Euphrates when dawns were young”	-----	“bathed”	“I”
“near the Congo”	“my hut”	“built”	“I”
“above it”	“the pyramids”	“raised”	Implicit “I”

**5.1.3 Mental Processes**

Line one, “I’ve known rivers,” (1) conveys the cognition process. This is due to the verb “known.” So, the Sensor, or rather, the agent-sensor is “I” and the Phenomenon is the “rivers.” By employing “I,” Hughes incarnates not only the black race, but also the whole human one. Besides, he shows that the Sensor has a knowledge of rivers. In line two, “I’ve known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins,” (2) the same initial clause is repeated for emphasis, and further description and comparison are annexed to the same line and the following one. In this case, “I” is the Sensor, and the Phenomenon is “rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.” They are expressed by the verbiage, “ve known.” The speaker states that rivers are as ancient as the creation of the world. Perceptively, he makes a comparison between the flow of water in rivers and the flow of blood in human veins. The speaker not only senses the rivers as a natural phenomenon, but also an integral part of his life.

The first clause in line seven, “I looked upon the Nile,” (7) shows the perception process in which the verb “looked” links the Sensor, “I” to the Phenomenon, “upon the Nile.” Line eight and nine, “I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln/went down to New Orleans,” are expressed in the perception process too because of the verb “heard.” The Sensor is “I” and the Phenomenon is “the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln/went down to New Orleans.” (8-9) Similarly, “The magical transformation of the Mississippi from mud to gold by the sun’s radiance is mirrored in the transformation of slaves into free men by Lincoln’s Proclamation” (Jemie1976,199).

The second part of line ten which continues to line eleven, “and I’ve seen its muddy/bosom turn all golden in the sunset” (10-11) include ‘perception’ process because of the verb “ve seen.” The Sensor is “I” and the Phenomenon is “its muddy/bosom turn all golden in the sunset.” As a result, it is believed that the more the rivers deepen with time and their water flow, the more the black soul endure the hardships. As an eyewitness to different civilizations in their good and bad conditions, the black man will survive even in America.

**Table (2): Mental process in “The Negro Speaks of Rivers”**

Phenomenon	Process	Senser
“rivers”	“ve [have] known”	“I”
“rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins”	“ve [have] known”	“I”
“upon the Nile,”	“looked”	“I”
“the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln/went down to New Orleans”	“heard”	“I”
“its muddy/bosom turn all golden in the sunset”	“ve [have] seen”	“I”



**5.1.4 Relational Processes**

In line four, “My soul has grown deep like the rivers,” (4) one may notice the clear indication to such a process through the use of the dynamic verb of transition, “grown.” The Carrier in this case is “My soul” and the Attribute is “deep like the rivers.” To be more specific, the Attribute “exists as the result of the process and can be called the “Resulting Attribute” (Angela Downing, 2006,145). The speaker wants to say that he is deep-rooted in this land just like the deep rivers, and not being a marginalized one. The relationship between the soul and the rivers appears to be timeless, pre-existing, and longer than human memory. Likewise,

The rivers are part of God’s body, and participate in his immortality. They are the earthly analogues of eternity: deep, continuous, mysterious. They are named in the order of their association with black history. The black man has drunk of their life-giving essences, and thereby borrowed their immortality. He and the rivers have become one.(Jemie1976, Modern)

**Table (3)**  
**Relational process in “The Negro Speaks of Rivers”**

Attribute	Process	Carrier
“deep like the rivers”	“has grown”	“My soul”

**5.1.5 Behavioural Processes**

There is no reference to such a process within the poem.

**5.1.6 Verbal Processes**

The second clause of line six, “and it lulled me to sleep,” (6) shows such a process through the verb “lulled.” The Sayer in this case is “it”—a reference to the Congo River and at the same time it is a personification of the mother’s figure—the Recipient is “me,” and “to sleep” is the Said. However, the Sayer should be animate while in this case it is inanimate. The poet is deliberately employs such a technique to equate the river with the mother being a source of origin, compassion, and belongingness.

**Table (4)**  
**Verbal process in “The Negro Speaks of Rivers”**

Said	Recipient	Process	Sayer
“to sleep”	“me”	“lulled”	“it”

**5.1.7 Existential Processes**

There is no reference to such a process in the poem.

Besides, line eleven is the same as line one, and the last line is the same as line four. Such repetitions are so important that they show the poem’s cyclical and musical tones. It is noteworthy that Hughes employs a “performative language” hence, “The Negro Speaks of

Rivers” “not only echoes the incantatory orality of pre-literate African cultures, but it also mirrors the incantatory orality of contemporary African American worship services, prayers, and songs.” (Rader, 2001, 207).

### 5.1.8 Metrological Processes

There is no reference to such processes in the poem.

#### 5.2.1 “Mother to Son”: An Overview

The other poem to be analysed is “Mother to Son” (p30) which is published in 1922. It is about evident from the title that the poem is a mother’s monologue addressing her son. Through that monologue the mother tells her son about the journey of life which is resembled by the long walking up a stair full of broken steps; representing the black soul, the mother associates her patience, endurance, and determination as ways in achieving her and her son’s dreams. Such dreams like equality, justice, and freedom are necessary for them to keep going in their journey. Written in dramatic monologue, the poem provokes readers to be in the position of both the mother and son (Wasley 1998, 185).

#### 5.2.2 Material Processes

Line nine, “I’s been a-climbin’ on,” (9) conveys this process through the verb “climbin’ on.” This action verb has only one participant: the Actor “I.” Lines from ten to twelve, “And reachin’ landin’s,/ And turnin’ corners, /And sometimes goin’ in the dark,” (10-12) show the process through the verbs: “reachin’, turnin’, and goin’” respectively. Additionally, they simultaneously have the same implicit Actor from line nine which is “I.” There are Goals in the first two: “landin’s,” and “corners,” while the third has the Circumstance, “in the dark.”

Lines fourteen and fifteen, “So boy, don’t you turn back/ don’t you set down on the steps,” (14-15) are expressive of such a process. There are no Goals for the action verbs “turn back” and “set down” are used as intransitives. So, the Actor in both is “you”—an indication to the “boy” in the previous line. But, the only difference is the second one includes a Circumstance, “on the steps” while the first is not. Line sixteen, “Cause you finds it’s kinder hard,” (16) shows the action verb, “finds”; the Actor, “you”; and the Goal, “it’s kinder hard.” Line seventeen, “Don’t you fall now—” is expressed by the intransitive verb “fall.” The Actor is “you,” but without Goal. The Circumstance is “now.”

Both lines eighteen and nineteen, “For I’s still goin’, honey,/ I’s still climbin’,” (18-19) denote the same process without Goals too. “goin’” and “climbin’” are the action verbs. “I” is the Actor in both lines. It is essential to mention that the use of contractions and special dialect—African-American—by Hughes refers to the colloquial, spontaneous, and simple

diction. Altogether, the use of genre and diction provokes readers to be identified with both the speaker and the listener. In this context, Hughes wishes to make an explicit connection between the speaker—the Negro Mother—and her black culture. For Wasley, the speaker is “representing a kind of collective voice, the voice of the generations of African-Americans” whose history was full of troubles (185).

**Table (5)**  
**Material process in “Mother to Son”**

Circumstance	Goal	Process	Actor
-----	-----	“’se been a-climbin’ on”	“I”
-----	“landin’ s”	“reachin’ ”	Implicit “I”
-----	“corners”	“turnin’ ”	Implicit “I”
“in the dark”	-----	“goin’ ”	Implicit “I”
-----	-----	“don’t-----turn back”	“you”
“on the steps”	-----	“Don’t-----set down”	“you”
-----	-----	“’se still goin’ ”	“I”
-----	-----	“’se still climbin’ ”	“I”

**5.2.3 Mental Processes**

There is no reference to Mental Processes.

**5.2.4 Relational Processes**

Line two, “Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair” (2) is an expression to the Relational Process, particularly the Identifying Process, because of the verb “been.” So, the Identified is “Life,” while the Identifying is “crystal stair.”The process expressed in line three, “It’s had tacks in it,” (3) is the Relational one. The verb “had” expresses the possessive relation between the Possessor, “It,” and the Possessed, “tacks.” Yet, the pronoun “It” refers to either “Life” or “crystal stair.” As a representative of Harlem Renaissance and African-American music, particularly, Jazz and Blues, Hughes, for Wasley, proves that he is “an innovator in adapting the forms and motifs of the blues—with its heavy beats, recurrent refrains, and melancholy narratives—and improvisatory riffs and earthy themes of Jazz, to poetry” (186).

**Table (6)**  
**Relational process in “Mother to Son”**

Circumstance	Attribute	Process	Carrier
-----	“crystal stair”	“ain’t been”	“Life”
“in it”	“tacks”	“s had”	“It”

**5.2.5 Behavioural Processes**

There is no reference to such processes within the poem.

**5.2.6 Verbal Processes**

Line one includes a clause, “I’ll tell you,” (1) that expresses the Verbal Process: “I” is the Sayer, “tell” is the verb that carries the message to the Target which is “you.”

**Table (7)**  
**Verbal process in “Mother to Son”**

Recipient	Process	Sayer
“you”	“I’ll tell”	“I”

### 5.2.7 Existential Processes

The process shown in line thirteen, “Where there ain’t been no light,” (13) is Existential. In such a process, “there” is an essential element to the structure of the process. The verb is “been,” the single participant, the Existent, is “no light.”

**Table (8)**

Existent	Process
“no light”	“Where there ain’t been”

The last line, “And life for me ain’t been no crystal stair,” (20) is the same as line two. The poem can be read as a young black man listen to his mother’s advice to achieve his goals and his race too through climbing the stairs while paying attention to the obstacles on them. Besides, the poem is also about a young poet who listen to his muse to determine his poetic voice. According to Wasley, Hughes learns from his mother “the value and power to his vocation. He hears in her song his own voice” (187).

### 5.2.8 Metrological Processes

There is no reference to such processes in the poem.

#### 5.3.1 “I, Too”

The last poem in the analysis of this paper is entitled, “I, Too.” (p.46). The poem was written in 1924 and published in 1926 in *The Weary Blues* as a reflection to Hughes’s love to his country, America. It is also a reflection to Hughes’s dream to be free, respected, and safe in a country that does not discriminate between the white and the black. The poem, as its title shows through the word “Too,” is a response to Walt Whitman’s “I Hear America Singing” (1860) in which the latter rejoices that America offers everything an individual dreams of. But, for Hughes it is not like this. So he hopes that segregation will come to an end one day. To begin the poem with the pronoun “I,” Hughes stresses that he, as a black man, is also the subject of the poem.

#### 5.3.2 Material Processes

Line three and four, “They send me to eat in the kitchen,/When company comes” (3-4) carry transferring process. In this case, four participants are required: Agent is “They”; Recipient is

“me”; Affected is “to eat”; and Circumstances are “in the kitchen,/When company comes.”

Line six “And eat well,” (6) shows that Actor, the affected subject, is not mentioned because it is the same as that in line five, “I.” Additionally, there is no Goal for the verb “eat” is intransitive here. Such a process also includes Circumstance “well.” The same process is also shown in line thirteen and fourteen, “Eat in the kitchen/ Then.” (13-14)The Actor is implicit “you,” because the clause is imperative, and Circumstances are “in the kitchen/Then.” However, there is no Goal.

For Hughes, “the majority culture’s dream of a progressive society based on individual fulfillment and social harmony . . . has created its own inevitable legacy—that is, the Black American Dream of realizing those dreams and ideals that have been written down for white folks (Westover2002, 109).

**Table (9)**  
**Material process in “I, Too”**

Circumstance(s)	Affected	Goal	Process	Actor
“in the kitchen,/When company comes.”	“to eat”	“me”	“send”	“They”
“well”	-----	-----	“eat”	Implicit “I”
“in the kitchen/Then.”	-----	-----	“Eat”	Implicit “You”

### 5.3.3 Mental Processes

In line sixteen, “They’ll see how beautiful I am,” (16) the process shown is perception. So, the agent-sensor is “They” and Phenomenon is “how beautiful I am.” They are linked by the verbiage “ll see.”

**Table (10): Mental processes in “I, Too”**

Phenomenon	Process	Sensor
“how beautiful I am”	“ll see”	“They”

### 5.3.4 Relational Processes

Within line two, “I am the darker brother,” (2) the poet shows the Identifying process via the verb, “am.” So, the Identified is “I” while the Identifier is “the darker brother.” Line seven, “And grow strong,” (7) carries the Identifying process, because of the verb, “grow.” But, the Carrier is not mentioned for it is the same as that in the previous line, “I.” In addition, such a process includes Circumstance, “strong.”Line nine, “I’ll be at the table,” is an expression to the Attributing process in which the verb “be” links the Carrier, “I” to the Attributive, “at the table.”

Line seventeen, “And be ashamed—” carries the same process as that in the previous line including the Carrier, “They.” Both Carrier and Attributive, “ashamed” are linked together through the verb “be.”The last line in the poem, “I, too, am America,” (18) unlike the first

line, includes the Identifying process in which “am” relates the Identified, “I” to the inanimate Identifying, “America,” due to the use of personification.

Through the use of the personal pronouns, Hughes wishes to give his poem a political touch. Similarly, he wants to say that the government has its role in discriminating people, particularly his black race. Therefore, the political inflections reflected by Hughes’ poetic personae show the conflict and injustices of American history and government alike. Indeed, West over reflects upon this fact by stating that “Hughes’ poetic configurations of ‘I’ and ‘we’ sometimes...refer to a diasporan black community, rather than to the imagined community of the United States, a fact which indicates the complex nature of his national consciousness” (110). It is clear that this is a direct criticism to the American democracy, and a challenge at the same time to the United States to cope with its dream of freedom.

**Table (11)**  
**Relational process in “I, Too”**

Circumstance	Attribute	Process	Carrier
-----	“the darker brother”	“am”	“I”
-----	“strong”	“grow”	Implicit “I”
“at the table”	-----	“’ll be”	“I”
-----	“ashamed”	“be”	Implicit “I”
-----	“America”	“am”	“I”

### 5.3.5 Behavioural Processes

This process is shown in line five, “But I laugh,” in which one participant, the Behavior—“I”—is involved because of the verb “laugh.”

**Table (12): Behavioural processes in “I, Too”**

Process	Behavior
“laugh”	“I”

### 5.3.6 Verbal Processes

The initial line in the poem, “I, too, sing America” (1) is an expression to this process in which “I” is the Sayer; the verbiage is “sing”; and the Target is “America.” Line eleven and twelve, “Nobody’ll dare/Say to me,” (11-12) include the Sayer, “Nobody,” and the Target, “to me.” The message is expressed by the Verbiage “say.”

**Table (13): Verbal processes in “I, Too”**

Said	Recipient	Process	Sayer
“America”	-----	“sing”	“I”
-----	“to me”	“’ll dare/Say”	“Nobody”

### 5.3.7 Existential Processes

There is no reference to such processes in the poem.

### 5.3.8 Metrological Processes

There is no reference to such processes in the poem.

**6. Conclusion:** As one of the American poets in 1920s, Langston Hughes proves that he is really a giant defender of the rights of the blacks. He represents Harlem Renaissance through his poetry by expressing patriotism, dreams, equality, non-violence, motherhood, the blacks' rights, and freedom spontaneously. All these great concepts are best explored via the use of transitivity by Hughes along the three poems discussed. Transitivity analysis gives more detailed information to the readers while analysing Hughes's poems. It also provides linguistic evidence to support the interpretation of the poems through showing what/who does what to whom/what in the main characters' world to decide on their meanings.

Likewise, in "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," Hughes uses Material Processes three times, Mental Processes five times, and Relational and Verbal Processes one time for each. But, there are no references to Behavioural, Existential, and Metrological Processes. Such various uses shed light on the Negro's knowledge of rivers being part of him or vice versa. By using the first person pronoun, "I," Hughes refers to himself—once by the pronoun "I" and others by "My soul"—as a representative of a whole black race in doing some actions in or near the above-mentioned rivers. This is another way to be proud of his identity and to inspire the other blacks to be strong-willed and to overcome oppression.

In "Mother to Son," Hughes employs Material Processes eight times, Relational two times, and Existential and Verbal Processes one time for each. Yet, there are no references to Mental, Behavioural, and Metrological Processes. Such different uses contribute in the importance of the Negro mother's directions, cautions, and advice to her son. It is also an expression to the mother's experience in life full of hardship, suffering, and inequality. Through the participants involved in these processes it is concluded that the mother is a model of dedicated, sacrificing, and heroic mothers—the present generation—who usually live with their sorrows and joys, their losses and victories to enlighten the way to their children—the younger generation. She devoted her energy, her youth, and even her life to deepen the sense in notions like independence, equality, and freedom in her son.

In "I, Too," Hughes uses Material Processes three times, Mental and Behavioural Processes one time, Relational Processes five times, Verbal Processes two times. However, there are no references to Existential and Metrological Processes. This is a smooth reflection of patriotism and freedom. Additionally, through some words like "too" Hughes succeeds in drawing a full comparison between his poem and that of Whitman, and the former wants to say that something is missing in the latter's notion of freedom: inequality between two races. The poet wants to say that he is part of the American culture even though he is a black. Hughes's political point of view and is also shown through the participants involved. Altogether, the poem is a cry against miscegenation Laws, separation between the black and the whites, and segregation.

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