



Experiential Meaning in *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie

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Abstract: *The present lexico-grammatical investigation is an exploration of language management in Purple Hibiscus by Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie. The objective of the paper is to describe the transitivity patterns of the novel through an extract to show how the author's choices reflect beyond the characters', her own experience and vision of life in post-independence Africa in general via the Nigerian case. Eggins (2004) went through Halliday's theory of systemic functional linguistics and the paper takes into account her work in the analysis of the clauses in the selected extract. The analysis has been conducted on the basis of the process type distribution in an extract selected in the context of the study and led to the conclusion that Adichie's handling of the language, though full of subtlety, helps the reader to decode the Nigerian post-colonial realities through the actions, events, happenings and doings by the protagonists of the extract. A particular stress is put on the expression of violence through the character of Papa Achike.*

Keywords: *Experiential meaning, transitivity patterns, process, lexico-grammar.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The cover page of books inform globally about the contents. The world of fiction is like a cover page of books in which language is the means of reality expression. Any relative reality experienced or even felt and perceived by the writers is rendered through language with words serving the writers to convey their vision about their surroundings. Experiences are expressed through language as an encoding system. The encoding is organized with meaningful choices people make out of the total amount of them existing in language as a system. Writers are the most talented actors in the context of choices operations.

In the set of choices evoked above, writers focus on texts. Texts allow writers to compress their experiences and viewpoints about the world in general and about their societies in particular. In the different choices, writers address the readers through roles assigned to characters. In the context, Halliday and Matthiesen (2004, 24) wrote: "We use language to make sense of our experience, and to carry out our interactions with other people. This means that the grammar has to interface with what goes on outside language: with the happenings and conditions of the world, and with the social processes we engage in". But they added that the grammar "has to organise the construal of experience and the enactment of social processes so that they can be transformed into wording". From that view, one can assert that the writer is compelled to process experiences into meaningful texts on the basis that a piece of language is inclined to making meaning with the support of lexico-grammatical choices that he/she operates in his/her writing. Hence, the objective of the present linguistic investigation is to analyse the lexico-grammatical choices made by Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* and how those choices reflect her experiences through the main character-narrator Kambili with her narrating camera on Papa Eugene's family as a prototype family connected to religion that does not prevent Papa Eugene from exercising violence on the members of his family. If violence is obvious Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's representation in the text under study, focuses on the lexico-grammatical choices through which she represented her experiences. The paper is organized into two

main sections the first of which is related to the methodological and theoretical framework. The second section is about data analysis and findings.

2. METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. Methodology

As indicated in the introduction, the study is a lexico-grammatical investigation about how language is used by Chimamanda to express her post-colonial views from Nigerian realities in the novel under study. For that, an extract from *Purple Hibiscus* drawn with a total of 192 clauses. The 192 clauses are labelled according to the process type classification and then summed up in a table. The reading of the table follows as the presentation of the data before the interpretation and the findings. The analysis is conducted according to the percentage scored by each process type following the transitivity analysis within the systemic functional linguistic framework realized by Halliday and as visited by Eggins (2004). The model adopted in the frame of the paper is qualitative and quantitative.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is concerned with the relationship between language and its functions in a social context. In the present study, Halliday's model of transitivity as presented by Eggins (2004) is considered. In fact, the SFL theory is mainly concerned with meanings. Halliday identified three different types of meanings. A language function corresponds to each type of meaning. The three meaning types are considered as the amount potentials from which the writer operates. Eggins (2004, 116) speaks about freedom of choice. In that context, she wrote: "The effect of this freedom is that language can take a finite number of expression units (sounds) to realize an infinite number of contents (meanings)". The three meanings with the corresponding language functions identified by Halliday are as follows: interpersonal meaning or interpersonal metafunction, the ideational or experiential meaning and the textual metafunction. Those three metafunctions go with any linguistic system in which the writer produces his/her intended meaning in relation to his/her will to depict them in discourse. Hence, it is a matter of communicative purposes in the choice. Eggins (2004, 139) wrote that the descriptive grammar allows the choices by "making statements and assessments not about good/bad, right/wrong, but about appropriacy or inappropriacy. Degree of appropriacy is assessed not in terms of arbitrary blanket statements about inflexible grammatical rules, but as statements about grammar as a set of choices for use in context". That is to say that "some choices are appropriate in certain contexts, but inappropriate in others." So, part of what the lexico-grammar has to do is to specify the contextual dimensions of appropriacy for different choices. As a conclusion, Eggins (2004, 139-140) wrote: "Being able to perform grammatical analyses, to understand how the lexico-grammar is structured, is an essential skill" one must possess if one wants "to be able to describe, discuss, compare and understand how people use language to do social life". It is in that frame the present paper is designed relatively with *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The clause is the core substance of the systemic functional linguistics.

It must be noted that all the three metafunctions step from the clause. The experiential meaning is concerned with clause as a representation (Eggins, 213). The process embodies the representation of the experience as the function. As Eggins (2004, 211) stated it, The clause is not just for giving information, but rather giving information about somebody or something with beyond the participants concerned with concrete actions, the indication of the location. More clearly, the clause is about giving information at a given place or time, about someone performing a concrete action, about a given object to someone else who takes profit of it. Here, the clause as exchange is concerned and the corresponding system of grammatical choice is transitivity.

It is relevant to give precision that in the study of transitivity, there are one major system (process type) and one minor system (circumstantial system) involved. To that is added the participant roles. Eggins (2004, 214) wrote: "Each process is associated with different participant roles, occurring in different configurations:

- Material process involves choosing the associated roles of an "Actor" which is obligatory in the realisation of statements, and some optional elements such as "Goal, Range or Beneficiary".
- Mental process involves roles such as Senser and Phenomenon

So, in describing the grammar of the clause as representation we have not only to describe the differences between process types, but also the associated differences in functional participant roles, and the possible selection of circumstances. In analysing transitivity structure in a clause, we are concerned with describing three aspects of the clause: the selection of a process in the verbal group of the clause, the selection of participants in the nominal group, and the selection of the circumstances in adverbial groups or prepositional ones. The following table informs about the process-participant-circumstance difference among the six process types identified until today.

Table1. *Process types and corresponding participants for meaning realisation*

Process types	Meanings	Participants directly involved	Participants indirectly involved
Material process (<i>action and event</i>)	Doing, happening	Actor, goal,	range, recipient, client, scope, attribute
Mental process (<i>Perception, Cognition, Desideration, Emotion</i>)	sensing, seeing, thinking, wanting, feeling	Senser, phenomenon	inducer
Behavioural	behaving	behave	behaviour
Verbal	Saying,	Sayer, target	Receiver, verbiage
Relational (<i>attribution, identification</i>)	Being, attributing, identifying, possessing	Carrier, attribute, identified, identifier, possessor, possessed, token, value	Attributor, beneficiary, assigner
Existential	existing	Existent	-

Source: Adapted from Halliday and Matthiesen (2004, 201-240)

Apart from the existential process type, the five other types involve direct and indirect participants. The material process involves directly an actor and a goal, but obliquely many other participants as indicated in table1. The relational process type has much more direct participants than any other process type because it is made of many subtypes. Each subtype of relational process contributes to the realisation of the meaning in a specific way. The analysis in the present article considers the data in their generality. The data are collected from an extract of *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This section is concerned with data presentation, interpretation and the pronouncements by the researchers.

3.1. Data Presentation

3.1.1. Corpus labelling (*Purple Hibiscus*, 11-16)

- **Keys**

Mat = material process, **Ver** = verbal process, **Beh** = behavioural process **Rel** = relational process, **Men** = mental process, **Exist** = existential process

Things **started to fall (Mat1)** apart at home when my brother, Jaja, **did not go (Mat2)** to communion and Papa **flung (Mat3)** his heavy missal across the room and **broke (Mat4)** the figurines on the étagère. We **had just returned (Mat5)** from church. Mama **placed (Mat6)** the fresh palm fronds, which **were (Rel1)** wet with holy water, on the dining table and then **went (Mat7)** upstairs to change. Later, she **would knot (Mat8)** the palm fronds into sagging cross shapes and **hang (Mat9)** them on the wall beside our gold-framed family photo. They **would stay (Mat10)** there until next Ash Wednesday, when we **would take (Mat11)** the fronds to church, **to have them burned (Rel2)** for ash. Papa, wearing a long, gray robe like the rest of the oblates, **helped distribute (Mat12)** ash every year. His line **moved (Mat13)** the slowest because he **pressed (Mat14)** hard on each forehead **to make (Mat15)** a perfect cross with his ash-covered thumb and slowly, meaningfully **enunciated (Ver1)** every word of “dust and unto dust you **shall return (Mat16).**”

Papa always **sat (Mat17)** in the front pew for Mass, at the end beside the middle aisle, with Mama, Jaja, and me **sitting (Mat18)** next to him. He **was (Rel 3)** first **to receive (Mat19)** communion. Most

people **did not kneel to receive (Mat20)** communion at the marble altar, with the blond life-size Virgin Mary mounted nearby, but Papa **did (Mat21)**. He **would hold (Beh1)** his eyes shut so hard that his face **tightened (Beh2)** into a grimace, and then he **would stick (Beh3)** his tongue out as far as it **could go (Mat22)**. Afterward, he **sat back (Mat 23)** on his seat and **watched (Beh4)** the rest of the congregation troop to the altar, palms pressed together and extended, like a saucer held sideways, just as Father Benedict **had taught (Ver2)** them to do. Even though Father Benedict **had been (Mat24)** at St. Agnes for seven years, people still **referred (Rel 4)** to him as "our new priest." Perhaps they **would not have (Rel 5)** if he **had not been (Rel 6)** white. He still **looked (Rel 7)** new. The colours of his face, the colours of condensed milk and a cut-open soursop, **had not tanned (Rel 8)** at all in the fierce heat of seven Nigerian harmattans. And his British nose **was (Rel 9)** still as pinched and as narrow as it always **was (Rel 10)**, the same nose that **had had me worried (Rel11)** that he **did not get (Rel 12)** enough air when he first **came (Mat25)** to Enugu. Father Benedict **had changed (Rel13)** things in the parish, such as **insisting(Ver3)** that the Credo and Kyrie **be recited (Ver4)** only in Latin; Igbo **was (Rel 14)** not acceptable. Also, hand clapping **was to be kept (Rel15)** at a minimum, lest the solemnity of Mass **be compromised (Rel16)**. But he **allowed (Ver5)** offertory songs in Igbo: he **called (Rel17)** them native songs, and when he **said (Ver6)** "native" his straight-line lips **turned down (Beh5)** at the corners to form an inverted U. During his sermons, Father Benedict usually **referred (Rel 18)** to the pope, Papa, and Jesus-in that order. He **used (Rel19)** Papa **to illustrate (Ver7)** the gospels. "When we **let (Rel 20)** our light **shine** before men, we **are reflecting (Rel21)** Christ's Triumphant Entry," he **said (Ver8)** that Palm Sunday. "Look at Brother Eugene. He **could have chosen to be (Rel 22)** like other Big Men in this country, he **could have decided to sit (Mat26)** at home and **do (Mat 27)** nothing after the coup, **to make (Rel23)** sure the government **did not threaten (Mat28)** his businesses. But no, he **used (Rel24)** the Standard **to speak (Ver9)** the truth ever though it **meant (Rel25)** the paper **lost(Rel26)** advertising, Brother Eugene **spoke out (Ver10)** for freedom. How many of us **have stood up (Rel27)** for the truth? How Many of us **have reflected (Rel28)** the Triumphant Entry?

The congregation **said (Ver11)** "Yes" or "God bless him" or "Amen," but not too loudly so they **would not sound (Rel29)** like the mushroom Pentecostal churches; then they **listened (Men1)** intently, quietly. Even the babies **stopped crying (Beh6)**, as if they, too, **were listening (Beh6)**. On some Sundays, the congregation **listened (Men2)** closely even when Father Benedict **talked (Ver12)** about things everybody already **knew (Men3)**, about Papa **making (Rel30)** the biggest donations to Peter's pence and St. Vincent de Paul. Or about Papa **paying (Rel31)** for the cartons of communion wine, for the new ovens at the convent where the Reverend Sisters **baked (Mat29)** the host, for the new wing to St. Agnes Hospital where Father Benedict **gave (Mat30)** extreme unction. And I **would sit (Mat31)** with my knees pressed together, next to Jaja, **trying hard to keep(beh7)** my face blank, to keep the pride from showing, because Papa **said (Ver13)** modesty **was (Rel32)** very important.

Papa himself **would have (Rel 33)** a blank face when I **looked (Beh8)** at him, the kind of expression he **had (Rel 34)** in the photo when they **did (Ver14)** the big story on him after Amnesty World **gave (Mat32)** him a human rights award. It **was (Rel 35)** the only time he **allowed (Ver15)** himself **to be featured (Rel36)** in the paper. His editor Ade Coker, **had insisted (Ver16)** on it, **saying (Ver17)** Papa **deserved (Rel37)** it, **saying (Ver18)** Papa **was (Rel 38)** too modest. Mama **told (Ver19)** me and Jaja; Papa **did not tell (Ver20)** us such things. That blank look **would remain (Rel 39)** on his face until Father Benedict **ended (Rel40)** the sermon, until it **was (Rel 41)** time for communion. After Papa **took (Rel42)** communion, he **sat back (Mat32)** and **watched (Beh9)** the congregation **walk (Mat33)** to the altar and, after Mass, **reported (Ver21)** to Father Benedict, with concern, when a person **missed (Mat34)** communion on two successive Sundays. He always **encouraged (Ver22)** Father Benedict to call and win that person back into the fold; nothing but mortal sin **would keep (Rel 43)** a person away from communion two Sundays in a row.

So when Papa **did not see (Men4)** Jaja **go (Mat35)** to the altar that Palm Sunday when everything **changed (Rel44)**, he **banged (Mat36)** his leather-bound missal, with the red and green ribbons **peeking out (Rel45)**, down on the dining table when we **got (Mat 37)** home. The table **was (Rel46)** glass, heavy glass. It **shook (Mat 38)**, as **did (Mat39)** the palm fronds on it.

Jaja, you **did not go** (Mat 40) to communion, Papa **said** (Ver23) quietly, almost a question. Jaja **stared** (Beh10) at the missal on the table as though he **were addressing** (Ver24) it. "The wafer **gives** (Mat 41) me band breath."

I **stared** (Beh11) at Jaja. **Had** something **come** (Rel 47) loose in his head! Papa **insisted** (Ver25) we **call** (Rel48) it the host because "host" **came** (Rel49) close to capturing the essence, the sacredness, of Christ's body. "Wafer" **was** (Rel 50) too secular, wafer **was** (Rel 51) what one of Papa's factories **made** (Mat42) - chocolate wafer, banana wafer, what people **bought** (Mat 43) their children **to give** (Mat 44) them a treat better than biscuits.

And the priest **keepstouching** (Mat 45) my mouth and it **nauseates** (Mat46) me," Jaja **said** (Ver 26). He **knew** (Men5) I **waslooking** (Beh 12) at him, that my shocked eyes **begged** (Beh 13) him to seal his mouth, but he **did not look** (Beh14) at me.

"It **is** (Rel 52) the body of our Lord." Papa's voice **was** (Rel 53) low, very low. His face **looked** (Rel 54) swollen already, with pus-tipped rashes **spread** (Rel 55) across every inch, but it **seemed to be swelling** (Rel 56) even more. "You **cannot stop receiving** (Mat47) the body of our Lord. It **is** (Rel 57) death, you **know**(Men6) that."

Then I **will die** (Mat 48)." Fear **had darkened** (Rel 58) Jaja's eyes to the colour of coal tar, but he **looked** (Beh 15) Papa in the face now. Then I **will die** (Mat49), Papa."

Papa **looked** (Beh16) around the room quickly, as if **searching** (Mat 50) for proof that something **had fallen** (Mat 51) from the high ceiling, something he **had never thought** (Men7)**would fall** (Mat 52). He **pickedup** (Mat 53) the missal and **flung** (Mat 54) it across the room, towards Jaja. It **missed** (Mat 55) Jaja completely, but it **hit** (Mat56) the glass étagère, which Mama **polished** (Mat 57) often. It **cracked** (Mat 58) the top shelf, **swept** (Mat 59) the beige, finger size ceramic figurines of ballet dancers in various contorted postures to the hard floor and then **landed** (Mat 60) after them. Or rather it **landed** (Mat 61) on their many pieces. It **lay** (Exist 1) there, a huge leather-bound missal that **contained** (Rel 59) the readings for all three cycles of the church year.

Jaja **did not move** (Mat 62). Papa **swayed** (Mat 63) from side to side. I **stood** (Mat 64) at the door, **watching**(Beh17) them: The ceiling fan **spun** (Mat 65) round and round. Then Mama **came** (Mat 66) in, her rubber slippers **making** (Mat67)*slap-slap* sounds on the marble floor, she **had changed** (Rel 60) from her sequined Sunday wrapper and the blouse with putty sleeves. Now she **had** (Rel 61) a plain tie-dye wrapper tied loosely around her waist and that white T-shirt she **wore** (Mat 68) every other day. It **was** (Rel 62) a souvenir from a spiritual retreat she and Papa **had attended** (Mat 69); the words GOD IS LOVE **crawled** (Mat 70) over her sagging breasts. She **stared** (Beh18) at the figurine pieces on the floor and then **knelt** (Mat 71) and **started to pick**(Mat 72) them up with her bare hands.

The silence **was broken** (Rel63) only by the whirl of the ceiling fan as it **sliced** (Mat73) through the still air. Although our spacious dining room **gaveway** (Rel64) to an even wider living room, I **feltsuffocated** (Men 8). The off-white walls with the framed photos of Grandfather **were narrowing**(Men 9) bearing down on me. Even the glass dining table **was moving** (Men 10) towards me.

3.1.2. Recapitulation of the Process Distribution

The extract contains all the six process types identified by Halliday but in far different proportions. About the types, the material process ranks the first with 73 in number out of 192 (38.02%), immediately followed by the relational process with 64 or 33.33%. The verbal process ranks the third with 26 (13.54%), followed by the behavioural process with a score of 18 (09.38%). The mental process then follows with only 10 (05.21%). The existential process hardly exists with only a single clause as indicated in table 2 below.

Table 2. *Synopsis of the process type distribution in the corpus*

Processes	Extract	
	Number	%
Material	73	38.02%
Mental	10	05.21%
Behavioural	18	09.38%

Verbal	26	13.54%
Relational	64	33.33%
Existential	01	00.52%
Total	192	100%

The passage has been chosen because of its position in the narrative. It is a passage at the beginning of the novel. But, as the labelling exercise helped to realise it in the content, in terms of process type distribution, the respective scores are really semantically evocative. The following section is about the interpretation where the respective values are mentioned for the different variables.

3.2. Interpretation

Table2 shows a high predominance of Material processes (73 out of 192). That high prevalence of material process accounts for the existence of concrete and tangible actions in the extract. The material process is the process of doing or happening, that is, activities and events in which characters are engaged, in which they perform actions. The extract sets the stage from the very first sentence: “Things *started to fall apart* at home when my brother, Jaja, *did not go to* communion and Papa *flung* his heavy missal across the room and *broke* the figurines on the étagère” (P.11). That first sentence is a clause complex containing four clause all of them being material. The reader discovers Papa Achike enough angry against the narrator’s brother, Jaja. Anger is an emotional situation, but expressed through concrete actions. Moreover, there is a sparkling organisation of the clause complex: the first material process sums up the whole sentence, if not the passage relatively with the global meaning, then comes a series of other material processes in a cause-effect format with Jaja and Papa Achike the inducers (*did not go to church –flung his heavy missal-broke the figurines*). Those processes are operative with different actors and goals as indicated in Table 3 below.

Table3. Succession of operative material processes in the corpus

Actor	Operative material process	Goal
<i>Things</i>	<i>started to fall apart</i>	-
<i>Jaja</i>	<i>did not go</i>	<i>To church</i>
<i>Papa</i>	<i>flung</i>	<i>his heavy missal</i>
<i>That (his heavy missal)</i>	<i>broke</i>	<i>the figurines</i>
Actor	Process: material	Goal/circumstance

In a paradigmatic perspective, “things” is in relation with “Jaja”, “Papa”, and “that (his heavy missal)”. In that relation, “things” stands for all the other actors. As such, the cause-effect relation starts from Jaja as the reason why “Papa flung his heavy missal”, then the broking of the figurines is due to the flinging of the missal by Papa. The cause-effect relationship accounts for the operating of the three processes the synthesis of which is the first material process (*started to fall apart*). The process is labelled material. But the realisation, taking into account the fact that the verb is intransitive, is much more mental. The narrator realises at the moment all the scenery, at the presumption that things will be spoilt in series. This can help understand the importance of relational process in the corpus.

The relational process is a process of “being” and “having”. The relationship is expressed without any action, that is, any movement with participants engaged. As mentioned in table1, the relational process can be attributive or identifying. In each of the two types, there are three subtypes. An attributive or identifying relational process can be intensive, circumstantial or possessive. According to Eggins (2004, p.39), further precision is possible for the circumstantial and the possessive relational processes. In the attributive case, the circumstantial may have the circumstance as attribute or as process, and the possessive having possession as participant or process. In the identifying case, the circumstantial has circumstance as participant or process, and the possessive still has possession as participant or process.

The relational process ranks the second in number with 33.33% (64 out of 192). This predominance means the construing of change that some entities undergo concern no tangible action on them as participants. The following clauses are examples drawn from the extract:

- 1- *Which (the palm fronds) (carrier) - were (intensive attributive)- wet with holy water (attribute)*

- 2- *people still (token)–referred to (intensive identifying) - him as "our new priest (value)*
- 3- *they (the congregation) (carrier) - would not sound(intensive attributive) - like the mushroom Pentecostal churches (attribute)*
- 4- *Papa himself (possessor) - would have (possession)- a blank face (possessed)*

Another subtype of relational process is used in the extract. Eggins (2004, 248) called it “causative relational process”. It has participants labelled “agent/attributor” or “agent/assigner” and “carrier-attribute” or “token-value”. In fact, according to whether the causative relational is attributive of identifying, there are corresponding participants. In the case of attributive relational process, “an agent/attributor causes the carrier to have an attribute ascribed”. And for the identifying one, “the agent/assigner makes the token take a value”. The examples below of causative relational process are from the corpus.

- 5- *to have them (the palm fronds) burned for ash*
- 6- *the same nose that - had had – me -worried*

In (5), the agent is eclipsed due to the structure of the clause complex. The pronoun “them” stands for the palm fronds and is the carrier of the attribute represented by the “burned” in an adjective role. In (6), the structure is the same except that the agent is mentioned.

The second position occupied by the relational process with different subtypes stand for the subtlety of the changes brought to the participants without them acting, contrarily to the material process. The palm fronds in example (5) above as “me” in (6) stand for the local material contributions in the edification of the church as an ideology in which errors are not allowed. The narrator, through the personal pronoun “me”, in a mental context, represents Africans in the worries they undergo, most of the time, unconsciously with the light of that nature shed by individuals like Papa Achike as described by Chimamanda throughout the extract and as mentioned in the interpretation of the material process, mainly with the clauses opening the narration in the extract. We mentioned the fury of Papa Achike against his family members through the example of the narrator’s brother who missed a communion mass. The use of some semi-material processes as relational indicates the subtle style by the writer to present the changes characters undergo. The following examples are illustrative:

- 7- “...she **had changed** from her sequined Sunday wrapper and the blouse with putty sleeves”.
- 8- “The silence **was broken** only by the whirl of the ceiling fan...”
- 9- “Now she **hada** plain tie-dye wrapper tied loosely around her waist.”

Illustrations (7) and (8) contain processes that we call here semi-material though they are labelled relational because of the meaning. They are not ascribed qualities, nor identified, but rather described as a new state they lead to. Example (9) is a possessive relational process that establishes the relationship between the narrator’s mother and her clothing once back from the communion. Though possessive, the process also shows a change in Madame Achike. The verbal process ranks the third place in predominance with 26 clauses (13.54%).

The very first verbal clause in the extract comes at the end of a clause complex having helped describe Papa Achike at duty: “His line moved the slowest because he pressed hard on each forehead to make a perfect cross with his ash-covered thumb and slowly, meaningfully **enunciated** every word of “dust and unto dust you shall return”. The verbal process is a process of saying in which a certain number of participants are identifiable. The *sayer* is the participant who speaks, who says. Through the narratized passage, the reader realises that Papa Achike is the one occupying the function of sayer. The process is “enunciated” and the *verbiage* is the audible utterance “dust and unto dust you shall return”. It is simply the message on behalf of which the clause is expressed. The other participant possible in a verbal clause is the “receiver”. Here, the indeterminate “you” is the receiver, a deictic “you” standing for any follower in general and the one undergoing the ash-covered thumb line on the forehead. For a religious fanatic, repeating the phrase for any faithful follower is a sign of his own loyalty maybe not only to the Lord but also Father Benedict who shows him in example.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie uses verbal process in a specific way. Readers who are accustomed to dialogue in its specific typing markers know that reporting processes are physical distinguishable from the verbiage due to the typing signs that accompany the text. But here, the author used the verbal

process in a semi narratized format along with a semi dialogue one. In fact, the dialogue is characterised by the use of semi-colon, comas and inverted comas in a dialogue and none of them in narratization. But, here, only the process is narratized. The verbiage is presented in its dialogue form. In doing so, the author intends to put the reader in the context of the characters' voices with their imagined sound and pitch.

The verbal clauses are usually accompanied by quotes but when reported, it is not in quotes. Adichie used verbal clauses in the novel to develop accounts of dialogue together with quotes of what was said. The essence is to bring out the typical voices of the characters in its natural way. A few behavioural and mental processes are also identified in the corpus with their respective distribution and relative signification.

There are only 18 (09.38%) behavioural processes in the extract. The behavioural process, according to Eggins (2004, 233-234) quoting Halliday, is a process semantically "half-way between mental and material processes". The meaning it realises is "mid-way" between those two processes. The behavioural process is composed by an atypical action that a conscious being experiences and its typical physiological and psychological aspect that is close to "doing". They are almost in a number making the double of mental processes. The nature of the behavioural process described in the section coupled with the weak proportion of mental process stands a powerful semantic realisation by Chimamanda to express her feeling about how Africans enjoyed part of the cultural encounter between Africa and the Western: "*He would hold his eyes shut so hard that his face tightened into a grimace, and then he would stick his tongue out as far as it could go*" The diction of the author evokes the unnatural effort made by the character to perform actions (*eyes shut so hard – his face tightened into a grimace – he would stick his tongue out as far as it could go*). The summum of the scenery comes at the end of the extract with a few semantically mental clauses: "*Although our spacious dining room gave way to an even wider living room, I felt suffocated. The off-white walls with the framed photos of Grandfather were narrowing bearing down on me. Even the glass dining table was moving towards me*" (P. 15-16). The narrating picture is designed here to describe the routine in which the Achike family is and the narrator sounds aghast: "*the framed photos of Grandfather were narrowing bearing down on me*" and "*Even the glass dining table was moving towards me*". Philosophically, all those societal deeds and behaviours are irrespective of the fact that life is unique on earth at least for everybody. The evidence is supported by the presence of only one existential clause in the extract.

3.3. Findings

The nature of the description helps the researchers to have some pronouncements having to do with the artistic talent with which Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie presented the events and happenings of her story. At the beginning, the predominance of the material processes connected with Papa Achike evokes violence, violence in opposition with their rationale: religious loyalty. The final picture is the falling apart of things as announced at the outset of the extract (pp. 11 and 16). That choice in the frame of transitivity system helped the writer in her conception of literary construction to express her experience through the characters' of her novel with a clear orientation but without any indication of position.

The second rank in process predominance occupied by relational process with a variation of subtypes expresses the changes brought to the participants without actions to be engaged in. That choice indicates the degree of passivity in the frame of the struggle in which participants are engaged and a sign of hindering the true necessary material actions. That pronouncement is supported by the reduction of mental clauses into "listen", "know" and finally "suffocate" state. The relational processes are used to assign attribute to some actions, events, feelings and behaviours narrated on behalf of characters lexico-grammatically arranged. The reader has semantic support from the structuring of the processes, but he/she should not fail to perceive the ironic aspect that Chimamanda subtly presented through the dichotomy of using the missal to reprimand Jaja and the religious value the it (the missal) embodies. In sum, the clause, in its transitivity structure contains patterns that individually contribute to the experiential meaning of the clause; however Chimamanda sometimes used the clause in a way that confers it a meaning beyond. Contrarily to Dadjo and Hakibou (2021, 140) who found that "*The presence of identifying processes has helped in the Extract to ascribe some qualities to entities, just to define or specify ...*" in the present paper, we realized that most of the

relational clauses are semi-material and show mutations that entities undergo rather than only being defined or ascribed a quality. This is another aspect of the use of relational process in the making of meaning.

The author succeeded in drawing the reader's attention on a dichotomy. Western people avoid maliciously cultural aspects that may jeopardize their strategy of domination, but they know pampering. The author gives evidence in the narration: "During his sermons, Father Benedict usually referred to the pope, Papa, and Jesus-in that order. He used Papa to illustrate the gospels". And some sentences before, one can read: "Father Benedict had changed things in the parish, such as insisting that the Credo and Kyrie be recited only in Latin; Igbo was not acceptable". "But he allowed offertory songs in Igbo" (p.16). The combination of narrative techniques and transitivity patterns helped the writer render Papa Achike a fool.

4. CONCLUSION

The present research has been carried out to explore the experiential meaning in *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie, a Nigerian writer. Her text matches the systemic functional linguistic pattern with personal artistry. All the process types are present in her text, at least in the corpus selected.

The paper started with a theoretical design where the theory that underpins it is framed preceded by the methodology indicating the way the study is conducted. The theory frame went through the systemic functional linguistics with stress on experiential meaning with the transitivity patterns. The second part of the article dealt with the data management from the corpus. Some statistics of the different variables have been presented and interpreted.

The results showed the predominance of material processes followed by relational ones. That predominance helped to depict the violence expressed by Papa Achike who is portrayed as a fool in religious loyalty. He is used to give good example in series where he is evoked after the Pope but before Jesus. At the same time, his mother tongue is almost forbidden in mass celebration. Chimamanda's irony is expressed not only with material processes but also with an important number of relational clauses. Here, the writer went beyond the traditional attributive and identifying relational processes. She used semi-material processes as relational to describe not qualities ascribed but rather changes undergone by entities. Further lexico-grammatical applications can help discover other aspects of meaning production in Chimamanda's work.

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Citation: HAKIBOU Abdoulaye & DADJO Servais Dieu-DonnéYédia. "Experiential Meaning in *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie" *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, vol 9, no. 11, 2022, pp. 24-32. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0911004>.

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