

# Editorials in Indian English Women Magazine *Femina*: A Transitivity Analysis

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to explore the editorials of women fashion magazine *Femina* in order to study the type of text used in the letters written by the editor to the readers. The theoretical framework adopted for this purpose is MAK Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. This study makes an exhaustive analysis of transitivity processes used in 20 letters written from the desk of the editor of *Femina*. In this paper editor's letters of *Femina* are analyzed and appraised using transitivity to find the choice of processes used by the editor. This study establishes that SFL offers choice and this choice of processes is a strategic device availed by the editor to make the editorials advertisement oriented and hortatory in nature.

**Key words:** SFL, Transitivity Analysis, Processes, Participants, hortatory.

## 1. Introduction

Editorials, whether in newspapers or in magazines, form a very important part of the print media. They constitute content which has an immense influence on the readers. This effect, at times, is greater than even the articles or the advertisements. In women magazines, however, editorials are a non descriptive entity as people aren't even aware of the existence of editorials in women's fashion magazines. The editorial agenda of women's magazines, if at all present, fits seamlessly with the need to sell advertising space to fashion and cosmetics companies (Mc Cracken 1992). The editors of these magazines begin these editorials by choosing language which attracts the attention of the readers towards products advertised in a particular issue and allure them into buying the products advertised inside. My contention is that the editorials of women fashion magazines are relay texts which persuade readers into buying the products advertised in the magazine.

## 2. Methodology

Language is a social process, a tool of social communication which enables "human beings to build a mental picture of reality and to make sense of what goes on around them and inside them" (Halliday, 1994: 106). "Language is not natural, neutral, or static. It is arbitrary, value laden, charged with power relations and dynamic" (O' Shaughnessy 2010:65). Systemic Functional Linguistics says that language is structured to make three kinds of meanings simultaneously: textual, interpersonal and ideational: clause as a message, clause as an exchange of information and clause as representation. The lexico grammatical category of transitivity, a part of English linguist M.A.K. Halliday's systemic-functional grammar (1985; 1994), enables the analysis of the experiential function of people's perception of the world through the way they use language. The transitivity system of language has been widely used nowadays to analyze the language of speakers and writers. It studies the structure of sentences, which is represented by processes and participants involved in these processes. The processes are realized by the verbs and the participants are realized by nominal group. The circumstances in which participants and processes are involved are realized by the adverbial and propositional phrase. Language allows us to encode our mental picture of the physical world as well as the world of our imagination which can be explored from the text by analysing usage of clauses in the text.

The present study uses SFL framework to study editor’s letters of *Femina* with the aim to see what type of processes are dominant in the editorials of *Femina*. It also endeavours to specify the purpose that the editor tries to delineate through these letters and how the choice of clauses enables the editor to make the text advertisement oriented. The editorials of almost 20 *Feminas* from January 2015 to August 2015, each consisting of approximately 25 clauses, are studied. The processes in clauses are identified as belonging to material processes, verbal processes, mental processes, relational processes, behavioural processes and existential processes and the participants are marked.

### 3. Previous work

In the last 20 years a number of writers have analysed textual language of various texts like poems, novels, short stories, book reviews, English newspapers, magazine covers and inaugural speeches of presidents etc on the basis of Systemic Functional Linguistics to find out the participants and processes in order to construe the nature of the text. Afrianto et al 2014; Rizwan 2013; Zahoor and Janjua 2016; Tabrizi 2013; Jansson 2014; Kandowe 2014; etc. have analysed different texts by using transitivity. This paper aims to analyse the editorials of Indian English women magazine *Femina* on the basis of SFL using the grammatical category of Transitivity.

### 4. Result

Analysis of the Editor's letters, reveals that these letters consist mainly of material processes (44%) and relational processes (36%). Second in number are verbal processes (14%) followed by mental processes (5%) and existential and behavioural processes forming just a very small part of the whole lot (1%).

Processes	Material	Relational	Verbal	Mental	Existential and Behavioural
%age	44%	36%	14%	5%	1%

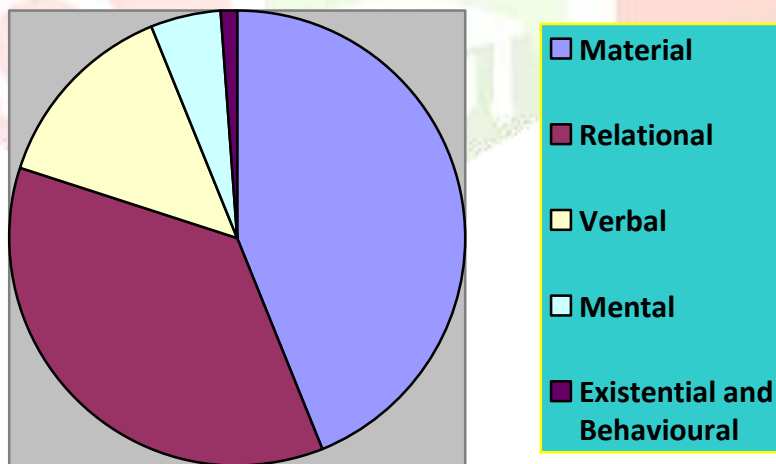


Table: Showing distribution of various processes

### 5. Discussion and Observation

#### 5.1 Material Process:

These processes construe doings and happenings. “They answer the question ‘what did X do?’ Or ‘what happened?’”(Butt 2000: 52). These processes describe the actions or events going on in the external surroundings. There are 44% material clauses in the data selected. Out of these clauses which promote action,

majority of the times it is *Femina* or its articles doing the act of taking the readers into the realm of the magazine as shown below. The reader is a mere recipient who is being lead by *Femina*:

Our The big story	takes	you	into the lives of last year's headline-makers
Actor	Pr: material	Recipient	Cir: place

'Love in fur acts'	on page 58	Awaits	you.
Actor	Cir: place	Pr: material	Goal

Here *Femina* acts upon the readers guiding them towards particular pages. This serves as a kind of covert persuasion as while moving to that page as 'prescribed' by *Femina*, the reader passes through a number of pages, looks at all these, develops interest and ends up reading them.

Where the action is not performed by *Femina*, there the editor herself performs the task of goading the readers into the articles which deal with one thing or the other of interest to the readers. Reader is again a passive recipient of the instructions:

Then again,	I	must lead	You	into another super read this issue.
Cir: time	Actor	Pr: material	Recipient	Cir: place

We		mull over		the hottest cover boy;
Actor		Pr: material		Goal

Do	hours of research	on hunky/cute men	for our cover story
Pr: material	Goal	Cir: matter	Cir: cause

and then finally	meet	the guys we like,	of course only professionally.
Cir: time	Pr: material	Goal	Cir: manner

Then there are clauses where the actors are ellipted. These actors are clearly 'you' the readers who are not important enough to be named. What is of prime importance is just the instructions which are for them to follow. These clauses ask the readers to go to a particular page for a particular kind of stuff, or to keep reading the *Femina*:

Plus, catch	more action	on our Twitter/FB/Insta feed.
Pr: material	Goal	Cir: place

Until next time then,	keep scrolling.
Cir: time	Pr: material

Meet	our pick of women who would go to any length to prove it.
Pr: material	Goal

Go to	page 52 for more on summer wardrobe
Pr: material	Cir: place

All the above clauses highlight the fact that the readers are mere objects acted upon by the magazine and its team. They are mere passive acceptors of information and instruction provided by the magazine. The editorials use clauses which are covertly persuasive in nature.

## 5.2 Relational Process:

These processes characterise and identify things. Essentially the processes of being, they describe the relationship between two things or concepts. “They relate a participant to its identity or description” (Butt 2003: 58). These processes add descriptiveness and preciseness to writing making it informative and factual. The relational processes often serve as complements to the description of material processes and help produce more precise but less dull texts.

36% of the clauses in the editor’s letters are relational. These clauses are basically used to describe things which the particular issue of *Femina* offers:

It	is	a winter wardrobe special for the adventurous.
Token	Pr: relational	Value

This issue	Has	it all.
Possessor	Pr: relational	Possessed

These clauses are also utilized to describe the wonderful beauty of celebrities which is also the outcome of the products advertised.

Kareena Kapoor	is	a prime example of beauty.
Carrier	Pr: relational	Attribute

In fact, eight out of the ten beauties	on our list	Are	in the age range of late 20s to mid 30s.
Carrier	Cir: place	Pr: relational	Attribute

Incidentally,	men	Are	at their most attractive at age 34.
	Carrier	Pr: relational	Attribute

These relational processes are used as descriptions to attract the readers more and more towards reading the particular issue thereby performing the role of persuading the readers.

### 5.3 Verbal Process:

Verbal processes construe sayings where the potential participants are: the sayer who utters the clause, the receiver who is addressed by the sayer, and verbiage which constitutes the whole saying of the sayer. The editorials of *Femina*, have 14% verbal clauses which specifies that these editorials are not dialogic. Here speech is used just to specify what the magazine has to say. *Femina* does majority of the speaking when it talks about the products mentioned in its issues or when talking about awards sponsored by it. Majority of verbal clauses have *Femina* as the speaker:

Speaking	of all things beautiful,	Nykaa.com Femina Beauty Awards 2015 are round the corner.
Pr: verbal	Cir: matter	Verbiage

Femina	says:	make love, not war.
Sayer	Pr: verbal	Verbiage

At times the editor of *Femina* does most of the talking when she narrates about her small anecdotes or when she tells about the products advertised in the magazine:

Every Women’s Day,	we	talk	about established achievers and powerful women;
Cir: time	Sayer	Pr: verbal	Verbiage

I	am happy to report	that my tribe seems to be increasing.
Sayer	Pr: verbal	Verbiage

She	Relates	her shocking story even while embracing life and her big passion,
Sayer	Pr: Verbal	Verbiage

Surveys conducted by *Femina* also take up the role of sayer and they peculiarly describe about fashion or beauty surveys conducted by *Femina* or somebody else:

A survey conducted globally	states	that women at age 32 are at their most beautiful self.
Sayer	Pr: verbal	Verbiage

Here we again see the predominance of *Femina* and its team speaking to the readers who are persuaded into being passive listeners.

#### 5.4 Mental process:

Mental processes are processes of sensing, construing a quantum of change in the flow of events which takes place in the consciousness of the speaker or sener. There are generally two participants: sener which must be realized by a human or at least conscious participant and a phenomenon realized by a nominal group. 5% of the clauses in the data analysed are mental clauses. Out of these, majority are imperatives directing the readers to enjoy, or revel by reading the issue. They act upon the psyche of the readers with the definite proposition that they are going to enjoy the issue:

Enjoy	the issue.
Pr: mental	Phenomenon

Instead, revel	in the knowledge that young Sanaya sitting in Indore has access to the same collections that her Mumbai-based cousin does.
Pr: mental	Phenomenon

Enjoy	the issue as I think of ways to add to my collection of worthless things to confound innocent movers and packers with...
Pr: mental	Phenomenon

There are also clauses dealing with the feelings and thoughts of celebrities or of the editor but in no case do they portray the feelings of the readers:

Yep, a roadmap	for those of you who	believe	that food nirvana lies in not just the destination but also the journey.
	Senser	Pr: mental	Phenomenon

Here is beauty award to the girl	who	shuns	all awards.
Cir: place	Senser	Pr: mental	Phenomenon

Reading it	made	me	ache	for another holiday soon.
Agent	Pr: causative	Senser	Pr: mental	Phenomenon

I	think	of ways to add to my collection of worthless things to confound innocent movers and packers with...
Senser	Pr: mental	Phenomenon

#### 5.5 Behavioural process:

These processes construe physiological or psychological behaviour like breathing, coughing, smiling etc. (Halliday 2004; Butt 2003). The main participant (behave) is generally a conscious being but may also be a non living entity as in the case of personification. The less number of behavioural processes suggest that these

clauses don't serve to depict the behavior of people. There are a few instances of showing gratitude and that too from some celebrities:

An awardee who	thanks	cancer for all her achievements in the social space.
Behaver	Pr: behavioural	Phenomenon

### 5.6 Existential process:

These processes construe being as simple existence and there is only one participant known as existent. Existential texts generally begin by 'there' and occur at the beginning of the text or where the text is moving or developing into a new phase (Butt 2003). Existential clauses serve to introduce central participants and are mainly used in narrative type of texts. These existential clauses are used in editorials to show the existence of awards, or sessions with important people or to introduce cover girls or beautiful actors.

And then there	is	the super exciting news on L'Oreal Paris Femina Women Awards 2015.
	Pr: existential	Existent

Where there's beauty,	there	's	a challenge.
Cir: conditional	-	Pr: existential	Existent

There	are	also our quick our q 'n hey sessions with online divas Pernia Qureshi (of Pernia's PopUp Shop), Mohini Boparai Guleria (of Exclusively) and Sonal Bhatia (of Koovs).
-	Pr: existential	Existent

Then there	is	our Cover Girl Lisa Haydon {who brings much playful energy to a shoot that presents fashion with a twist.}
-	Pr: existential	Existent

These existential clauses introduce one or the other character or things of importance which is mentioned in *Femina*. This is indirectly drawing the attention of readers towards various articles of *Femina* making the editorials persuasive.

## 6. Conclusion

Editorials are narrations depicting comments of the editor. The above analysis highlights the choice of processes made by the editor of *Femina*. In the editor's letters of *Femina* there is predominance of material processes and relational processes, material processes forcing action and relational processes describing things or people in *Femina*.

Majority of the clauses have actors ellipted which shows that the sentences are imperative with the editor making suggestions and commands to the readers to follow. The editorials are infact "relay texts which are a very important part of the planned integration of the editorial and advertising material...because they require us to look through several pages of advertisements to find the indicated article" (McCracken 1993: 46). So we find out that the letters from the editor's desk are mainly instructive and persuasive. By the choice of clauses, the editor informs the readers about the things available to make them gorgeous, super stylist and drop dead beautiful and persuades them covertly to add luxury to their life and new clothes to their wardrobe to make a normal woman look gorgeous. In this simple informative process, the editor makes the text hortatory, persuading the readers covertly towards the products advertised in the magazine.

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