



TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS OF BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILES OF PAKISTANI POLITICIANS IN PAKISTANI ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

The study analyses Halliday and Matthiessen's Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) model to identify how language functions in biographical profiles of Pakistani politicians that are published in English Newspapers. The corpus for this study includes three biographical profiles, namely, the profile of Javed Hashmi in Dawn, the profile of Hakim Ali Zardari in Dawn and the profile of Salman Taseer in Daily Times. These texts are divided into thirty-six independent clauses and each of these clauses is analyzed for six process types, namely Material, Mental, Relational, Verbal, Behavioural and Existential. The analysis is done by using detailed, clause-level tables where parties, circumstances, and ideological interpretation are identified for each clause. The most frequent processes are the material processes (38.9%), which highlight the politicians as actors whose actions form national history. The study draws on specific concepts from Fairclough (1995, 2015)- especially naturalisation and ideological importation — and Van Dijk (2008)- particularly macro-semantic generalisation and ideological square — to explain how transitivity patterns help in reproducing the dominant embedded ideologies. The results show that the genre of biographical profile is a place for the process of identity construction and that it is grammatically ideologically determinative. This study adds to the existing body of knowledge of SFL-based media discourse analysis in the under-researched South Asian context and its implications for media literacy, critical language awareness pedagogy and political communications studies in Pakistan.

Keywords: *Biographical Profiles, Media Discourse, Pakistani Political Discourse, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Transitivity Analysis.*

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background: SFL and Transitivity

Language not only represents reality but also actively constructs it. It actually helps to create the world we live in. This power of language is important when we talk about politics and the media. Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL), pioneered by Halliday (1985,1994) and elaborated in Halliday and Matthiesen (2004,2014), provides the theoretical architecture for investigating these grammatical-ideological relationships. Central to SFL's ideational metafunction is the Transitivity system: a grammar of doing, being, thinking, saying, behaving, and existing that reveals how texts construct particular versions of reality (Eggins, 2004; Thompson,2014). Transitivity analysis has been applied productively to news discourse, political speeches, and biographical narratives because it lays bare the structural options embedded in seemingly transparent language. (Fowler, 1991; Richardson, 2007)

Transitivity analysis has been productively applied to the study of news discourse, political speeches, obituaries, and biographical profiles because it lays bare the structure choices embedded in seemingly factual language. Who is the Actor that does things? Who is the passive Goal upon whom things are done? Is a politician represented as a powerful initiator of material processes, or as a patient carrier of attributes assigned by others? Such questions move the analyst from the surface level of text to the deeper stratum of ideology that underlies it.

1.2. Media Discourse and Political Identity Construction

The media is not just a vehicle for news. It influences our understanding and experience of the political world. News articles and profiles tend to provide a wider range of information than just the facts and usually incorporate an opinion and some degree of comment. Martin and Rose (2007) state that the narrative about biographies is not simply a narrative of what happened, but also a narrative of how we should think about the person. They inform our opinion on the good or bad deeds of politicians. The English language newspapers carry importance in Pakistan for educated people who can change the policy through discussions on politics. Political profiles in these newspapers are a tool for thinking about politicians. They can either make people like or dislike a politician. They can mold people's attitudes even on politics as a whole. The media is used to convey information about politicians and their beliefs to us. This includes English newspapers, which influence people's views on politics. Politicians and their profiles are very important in these newspapers, and the media plays an important role in the process of creating the political landscape.

1.3. Pakistani Political Discourse: Context and Significance

Pakistan's politics is complicated. It continues to march back and forth in the footsteps of democracy and military dictatorship. There are also several leaders and

various groups that aren't always in harmony. The media in Pakistan has its power. Given all these, attention needs to be paid to the discourse of Pakistani newspapers on politics. Many people read newspapers such as Dawn, Daily Times, The Nation and Express Tribune. They are the ones who make decisions and form opinions. These newspapers do discuss politicians, and their writing can influence the perception that they have of the importance of these politicians, but no one has examined the way that these newspapers use the language to shape an image of who these politicians are.

Previous studies on the use of the transitive structure in political discourse have tended to look at news reports, speeches, or editorials (Akhtar 2018; Hussain & Mahmood 2020; Ngo et al. 2019; Zhu 2022). There have been very few analytical studies on the biographical profile as a genre and no comparative multi-profile studies in the context of Pakistan. This study aims to tackle these gaps by focusing on the political biographical profile as an ideologically salient genre and by systematically analysing the transitivity of each clause in the three profiles applied to three different newspaper sources and three political generations.

1.4. Research Objectives

1. To segment biographical profiles into independent clauses and classify them according to Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) six-process Transitivity framework.
2. To analyse how process type selection and participant role assignment construct ideological representations of Pakistani politicians.
3. To examine how transitivity patterns in Pakistani newspaper biographies reproduce broader frameworks of power, leadership, sacrifice, and national identity.

1.5. Research Questions

1. What are the dominant process types and their distributions in biographical profiles of Pakistani politicians in Pakistani English newspapers?
2. How do transitivity choices and participant role assignments construct particular ideological representations of the profiled politicians?
3. In what ways do these grammatical patterns function as mechanisms of political identity construction and ideological reproduction in Pakistani media discourse?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Systemic Functional Linguistics: Theoretical Foundations

Systemic Functional Linguistics, as developed in Halliday's (1985, 1994) foundational works and consolidated in Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), conceptualizes language as a social semiotic resource structured simultaneously around three metafunctions: the ideational (representing experience), the interpersonal (enacting social relationships), and the textual (organizing messages). This multi-functional architecture

makes SFL particularly suitable for discourse analysis, as it provides analytical tools to explore how the same grammatical structure can function simultaneously as a device for representing, relating and organising (Eggins, 2004; Thompson, 2014). Systemic Functional Linguistics has been the basis for much research on language use in real situations. Eggins (2004) provides a detailed account of this. He shows how the choices we make when we put sentences together can affect what we mean. Thompson (2014) underscores how the clause-as-representation is realised through the Transitivity system.

2.2. The Transitivity System

The Transitivity system is the grammatical realization of the ideational metafunction in the clause. It is a system which 'construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types, each of which has its own configuration of participants and circumstances' (Halliday and Matthiessen, p. 213). In the system, there are six types of processes: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioural and existential. Each has its own characteristic roles of participants and circumstantial elements. Crucially, the choice of one process type over another to encode the same event is never ideologically innocent: 'the same piece of reality', as Fowler (1991, p. 70) notes, 'can be represented in very different ways through different transitivity choices.

This is the analytical starting point for ideological critique. By examining which process types are selected, which participants are given agency, and which circumstances are foregrounded or backgrounded, analysts can make visible the ideological work that grammar does.

2.3. Halliday and Matthiessen's Six Process Types

Table 1 below summarises the six process types, their semantic domains, participant roles, and exemplary clauses drawn from the corpus of this study:

Table 1: Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) Six Process Types with Corpus Examples

Process Type	Semantic Domain	Core Participants	Prototypical Example
Material	Doing / Happening	Actor; Goal	Hashmi led the protest against the government.
Mental	Thinking / Feeling / Perceiving	Senser; Phenomenon	He believed Pakistan should not recognise Bangladesh.
Relational	Being / Having / Becoming	Carrier–Attribute / Token–Value	Taseer was a liberal voice in Pakistani politics.
Verbal	Saying / Signifying	Sayer; Verbiage; Receiver	He said whatever he wanted in party meetings.
Behavioural	Physiological / Psychological behaviour	Behaver	Zardari immersed himself in the political scene.

Existential	Existing Occurring	/Existent	There remained a man of unshakeable conviction.
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Material processes are processes of doing and happening involving an Actor who acts, and optionally a Goal upon whom it is directed (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Mental processes construe the world of consciousness and cognition, affection, and perception through the interaction of a Sayer and a Phenomenon. Relational processes establish states of being and having, either attributing qualities to a Carrier (attributive) or equating a Token with a Value (identifying). Verbal processes represent acts of saying, involving a Sayer, Verbiage, and Receiver. Behavioural processes occupy a borderline between material and mental, encoding physiological and psychological behaviours. Existential processes affirm the existence or occurrence of entities, typically realised through a single Existent participant (Eggins, 2004; Thompson, 2014).

2.4. The SFL Model and the Ideational Metafunction

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) model of Systemic Functional Linguistics, specifically the Transitivity system within the ideational metafunction. Language, in this framework, is understood as a network of systems and organised sets of options from which speakers and writers make selections that simultaneously reflect and construct their social and experiential contexts. Every clause is the primary grammatical realisation of meaning at the ideational level, and every clause makes a selection from the Transitivity system: a choice of process type that determines the semantic configuration of participants and circumstances.

2.5. Participant Roles and Ideological Significance

Within the Transitivity framework, the assignment of participant roles is as ideologically significant as the selection of process type. In material processes, the Actor is the participant who initiates the action: consistent attribution of the Actor role to a political biographical subject constructs that subject as an autonomous, efficacious agent. The Goal is the participant upon whom the action is directed and may be an institutional structure (e.g., 'the Bhutto regime'), in which case the Transitivity configuration constructs the biographical subject as a challenger of institutional power. In relational processes, the distinction between Carrier-Attribute (attributive) and Token-Value (identifying) configurations carries different ideological implications: attributive clauses assign qualities, while identifying clauses establish symbolic equivalences that are particularly significant in the production of political mythologies. The analytical framework is operationalised through the clause-level tables presented in the data analysis section.

2.6. Past Studies

The study of transitivity in media texts has an academic background. Beginning with Fowler (1991), who applied SFL concepts to newspaper language, arguing that grammatical choices are not neutral; instead, they encode ideological positions and that

process type selection is a key mechanism through which news texts naturalise particular representations of social reality. Building on this, Richardson (2007) applied this framework to contemporary newspaper analysis, showing how differential attribution of agency through transitivity patterns correlates with the publication's political leaning. Most recently, Qasim et al (2018a) shifted the focus to literature. They argue that transitivity choices in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* reveal implicit power dynamics, particularly Changez's symbolic supremacy conveyed through extended monologue. They found that material processes dominate (61.77%) in Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, with the protagonist "you" as the most common participant. Male characters are constructed as powerful and active, while women appear as positive but weaker members of Asian society. Ngo et al. (2019) applied transitivity analysis to Vietnamese political news, finding that state-controlled media deployed material processes predominantly to construct government efficacy, while independent media employed more mental and relational processes to construct critical citizen subjectivities. Zhu (2022) examined English language coverage of Chinese political leadership, showing how relational and material processes construct images of benevolent governance. Abuczki (2019) studied transitivity in British tabloid crime reporting, finding that the passive construction and nominalisation of material processes systematically obscured criminal agency. Oteíza (2020) demonstrated how historical transitivity analysis could reveal the ideological construction of collective memory in political discourse. Beyond just media, transitivity analysis has proven to be applied to political speeches, manifestos, and institutional texts. Bartley and Hidalgo-Tenorio (2019) explored transitivity functioned within European parliamentary discourse, while Al-Hindawi and Kadhim (2019) applied the framework to political speeches by US and UK leaders, uncovering how the selection of process types functions to construct adversarial and allied roles in international political discourse. In the South Asian context, Hussain and Mahmood (2020) analysed Pakistani political rhetoric, demonstrating how material processes dominated self-representation while mental processes were typically used in relation to ideological conviction and national vision. Rehman and Ali (2022) found obituary profiles in Pakistani English newspapers, finding that transitivity choices reflected the political affiliations of the publishing newspapers. Muqaddas Shehzadi (2025) wrote an article on the 'Transitivity analysis of legal discourse in Pakistani High Court criminal cases'.

The specific intersection of SFL, transitivity, and Pakistani media discourse is an emerging area. Siddiqui (2023) applied transitivity analysis to the representation of male and female politicians in Pakistani English newspapers, finding systematic gender asymmetries in the attribution of agentive material processes. While researchers like Ali and Gilani (2021) identified the transitivity patterns in Express Tribune editorials on

political corruption, demonstrating how relational processes were used to assign culpability while verbal processes managed the attribution of accusatory statements. Anjum et al. (2023) used critical discourse analysis of Dawn's coverage of the 2022 political crisis, showing how the newspaper's language shaped specific narratives of constitutional legitimacy and political agency.

2.7. Research Gap

Current research on the subject shows three major gaps. First, the biographical profile as a unique form of media is lumped within broader categories of news discourse or political texts, obscuring its generic specificity and its particular mechanisms of uniquely shaping identity. Second, while transitivity analysis has been applied to Pakistani political speeches and editorials, comparative analyses of multiple biographical profiles in the same publication context are absent, making it impossible to identify genre-level patterns rather than individual author preferences. Third, the ideological implications of transitivity choices in Pakistani political biographies have not been theorised in relation to the specific political conjunctures in which the profiles were produced. This study addresses all three gaps through systematic, clause-level transitivity analysis of three profiles produced at distinct historical moments, interpreted in relation to the political contexts that gave them meaning.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Qualitative Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design appropriate for investigating how meaning is encoded in and constructed through language. Qualitative approaches are suited to the analytical aims of this study because they foreground the richness and specificity of textual meaning rather than statistical generalisation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.2. Corpus and Data Selection

For this study, I selected three biographical profiles of Pakistani politicians using purposive sampling (Palys, 2008). To ensure a meaningful analytical sample, these profiles are based on the specific criteria: the profile must feature a prominent Pakistani political figure, be published in a major Pakistani English newspaper; it must meet a sufficient length (minimum 600 words) to yield a meaningful analytical sample, and the profiles collectively must provide a diverse look at different political generations, ideological orientations, and newspaper sources. The resulting corpus comprises:

- (1) 'Profile: Javed Hashmi, the Perennial Rebel' (Muhammad Badar Alam, Dawn, 3 September 2014)
- (2) 'Hakim Ali Zardari: An Icon of Success' (Dawn, 24 May 2011)
- (3) 'Salman Taseer: A Political Biography of Courage, Controversy, and the Crisis of Pakistani Liberalism' (Daily Times, 2024)

3.3. Clause Segmentation and Sampling

To begin the analysis, I read each profile and broke it into independent clauses. From this collection, twelve clauses per profile were selected. This produced a total analytical sample of 36 clauses. The 3, 5, and 7 tables present the clauses selected from each profile for transitivity analysis. The segmented clauses are detailed in Tables 2, 4, and 6 below, before the transitivity analysis.

3.4. Analytical Procedure

Each clause was analysed according to Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) Transitivity framework through four analytical steps: (1) identification of the process (the verbal group); (2) classification of the process type; (3) identification and labelling of participant roles; (4) identification of circumstantial elements. The ideological interpretation of each clause was then constructed through the conceptual lenses of Fairclough (1995, 2015) and Van Dijk (2008), attending to how each transitivity configuration serves to construct particular political identities and reproduce ideological frameworks. Results are presented in six-column analytical tables.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Profile 1: Javed Hashmi

4.1.1. Clause Segmentation

The following table presents the twelve clauses selected from the Hashmi profile (Dawn, 2014) for transitivity analysis:

Table 2: Clause Segmentation Profile 1: Javed Hashmi (Dawn, 2014)

No.	Segmented Clause Profile 1: Javed Hashmi (Dawn, 2014)
C1	In early 1972, a group of youngsters barged into Governor House in Lahore.
C2	They were agitated because two girls had been kidnapped in the city's Samanabad neighbourhood.
C3	The leader of the protesters was one Javed Hashmi.
C4	Hashmi had just won a hard-fought student union election at Punjab University.
C5	Two years later, Hashmi made a similarly daring move.
C6	He led a group of youngsters raising anti-government slogans.
C7	He breached all security arrangements.
C8	He appeared right in front of the motorcade of the then Saudi King Shah Faisal.
C9	He remained behind bars for three and a half years.
C10	Hashmi would say whatever he wanted in party meetings without bothering about how it would affect his relationship with the party leadership.
C11	That ideology is based on three foundations: the supremacy of electoral democracy, dissent, and utter disregard for the consequences.
C12	He believed that he needed to challenge the high-handedness of the Bhutto regime.

4.1.2. Transitivity Analysis

Table 3 presents the detailed transitivity analysis of six selected clauses from the Hashmi profile:

Table 3: Transitivity Analysis of Profile 1: Javed Hashmi (Dawn, 2014)

Clause	Process Type	Participants	Circumstances	Ideological Interpretation
C6: He led a group of youngsters raising anti-government slogans.	Material	Actor: Hashmi; Goal: group of youngsters	Manner: raising slogans	Positions Hashmi as a decisive, fearless initiator of collective political action, constructing heroic leadership through physical mobilisation.
C7: He breached all security arrangements.	Material	Actor: Hashmi; Goal: all security arrangements	None	The institutional Goal amplifies Hashmi's transgressive agency; breaching the state apparatus marks him as morally superior to institutional power.
C12: He believed that he needed to challenge the high-handedness of the Bhutto regime.	Mental (Cognitive)	Senser: He (Hashmi), Phenomenon: need to challenge the Bhutto regime	None	Constructs an ideologically principled interior self; political action is grounded in moral conviction, not opportunism — elevating Hashmi to the status of a principled democrat.
C10: Hashmi would say whatever he wanted in party meetings without bothering about how it would affect his relationship.	Verbal	Sayer: Hashmi; Verbiage: whatever he wanted; Receiver: party leadership	Location: party meetings; Manner: without bothering	It frames verbal fearlessness. The circumstance 'without bothering' creates disregard for political consequence as integrity rather than recklessness.
C11: That ideology is based on three foundations — electoral	Relational (Attributive)	Carrier: that ideology; Attribute: three foundations	None	Relational attribution enhances personal biography to combine political philosophy, constructing Hashmi as an

democracy, dissent, and utter disregard for consequences.				ideologue rather than just a politician.
C9: He remained behind bars for three and a half years.	Existential	Existent/Carrier: He (Hashmi)	Duration: three and a half years; Location: behind bars	Imprisonment is neutrally explained, yet the circumstantial duration ('three and a half years') enhances sacrifice, composing Hashmi as a martyr of democratic conviction.

The transitivity analysis of the Hashmi profile shows a carefully orchestrated discourse of principled defiance built upon the systematic deployment of material processes with Hashmi as the actor and institutional structures as Goals. This particular grammatical pattern is ideologically productive: it creates Hashmi as a figure who acts against power, not in it. This construction is most sharply exemplified by clauses C6 ('He led a group of youngsters') and C7 ('He breached all security arrangements'). The two clauses put the same human agent, Hashmi, in the Actor slot, but the Goals are quite different in terms of institutional weight. To guide youth is to politically mobilise; to violate 'all security arrangements' is to violate the state. The escalation in the institutional importance of the Goals through successive material clauses creates a biographical story of heroic agency on the rise.

The mental process in C12 ('He believed that he needed to challenge the high-handedness of the Bhutto regime') functions crucially ideologically, providing the motivational interior for the external material actions. This is a common move in heroic biography discourse and the offering of an inner mental world that establishes action in conviction rather than opportunism. The construction of a coherent ideological subject, a person who acts from principle, as Fairclough (2003) argues, is a central mechanism through which political authority is legitimated. "Fairclough's (2003) analytical tools for textual analysis additionally inform the clause-level interpretive procedure adopted in this study." The verb 'believed' is particularly important: unlike 'thought' or 'decided', it encodes a quality of conviction that goes beyond rational calculation.

The verbal process in C10 'Hashmi would say whatever he wanted in party meetings' extends the heroic construction into the domain of speech. The circumstantial element 'without bothering about how it would affect his relationship with the party leadership' makes an act of verbal communication an act of social courage. Speech becomes a principled risk-taking, consistent with the broader transitivity profile of text. In

C11, the relational clause ("That ideology is based on three foundations") turns the biographical narrative of individual actions into a coherent political philosophy, elevating Hashmi from a politician to an ideologue. Transitivity patterns in this profile, when considered together, depict Hashmi as a democrat, a martyr and a man of principled conviction, an image that performs clear ideological functions in the political context of September 2014, when Hashmi's break with Imran Khan's sit-in had to be framed as a matter of principle rather than political calculation.

4.2. Profile 2: Hakim Ali Zardari

4.2.1. Clause Segmentation

Table 4: Clause Segmentation Profile 2: Hakim Ali Zardari (Dawn, 2011)

No.	Segmented Clause Profile 2: Hakim Ali Zardari (Dawn, 2011)
C1	Hakim Ali Zardari nursed dreams of making a name in politics since an early age.
C2	He started out in life by proving his mettle in business.
C3	He parlayed his success later into the dicey world of politics.
C4	He was born into a landlord family of Nawabshah district in 1930.
C5	Hakim Ali at first concentrated on farming.
C6	He could not keep himself aloof from politics for long.
C7	During the late 1950s he decided to set himself up in business in Karachi.
C8	He opted for the world of showbiz.
C9	Hakim Ali Zardari knew his biggest passion was politics.
C10	He immersed himself in the local as well as the national scene around the late 1950s.
C11	[He is] an icon of success.
C12	The lucky break came when the charismatic Zulfikar Ali Bhutto extended his hand of friendship.

4.2.2. Transitivity Analysis

Table 5: Transitivity Analysis Profile 2: Hakim Ali Zardari (Dawn, 2011)

Clause	Process Type	Participants	Circumstances	Ideological Interpretation
C1: Hakim Ali Zardari nursed dreams of making a name in politics since an early age.	Mental (Affective)	Senser: Hakim Ali Zardari; Phenomenon: dreams of making a name in politics	Time: since an early age	The affective mental verb 'nursed' intimate and nurturing make political ambition as inherent vocation, not calculated strategy. The temporal circumstance anchors the politician's destiny from childhood.
C2: He started out in life by proving his	Material	Actor: He (Zardari); Goal: his mettle	Manner: by proving his mettle	The material process synthesize self made entrepreneurial identity. Proving 'mettle' records

mettle in business.		[proven through business]		business success as a test of character, legitimising subsequent political entry using meritocratic narrative.
C9: Hakim Ali Zardari knew his biggest passion was politics.	Mental (Cognitive)	Senser: Hakim Ali Zardari; Phenomenon: his biggest passion was politics	None	The cognitive verb 'knew' refers political commitment as self-awareness rather than ambition. Passion is established as authentic identity, not career strategy, making the 'called to serve' political mythology.
C10: He immersed himself in the local as well as the national scene.	Material	Material: He (Zardari)	Location: local and national scene; Time: around the late 1950s	Reflexive constructions like "immersed himself" refer as Material processes.
C11: [He is] an icon of success.	Relational (Identifying)	Token: He (Zardari); Value: an icon of success	None	This identifying relational process is the profile's most ideologically loaded clause. The headline-level identification converts a complex dynastic biography into a singular evaluative symbol, naturalising success as the definitive reading of Zardari's life.
C3: He parlayed his success later into the dicey world of politics.	Material	Actor: He (Zardari); Goal: his success [transformed into political capital]	Time: later; Location: the dicey world of politics	The verb 'parlayed' constructs strategic agency. Zardari nonetheless entered confidently, reinforcing the risk-taking entrepreneur identity.

The Zardari profile shows a clear transitivity profile based on an interaction of mental and material processes that create a biographical story of destiny fulfilled through self-made success. Whereas the Hashmi profile encodes transgressive political action in material processes, the Zardari profile encodes entrepreneurial choice and economic agency primarily in material processes. This difference in the Goals of material processes follows from a radically different biographical mythology: not the rebel who challenges

power, but the achiever who turns personal success into political capital. The most prominent clause, both ideologically and grammatically, in the profile is the mental process in C1 ‘nursed dreams of making a name in politics since an early age’.

The verb ‘nursed’ is an affective mental process verb with intimate, embodied connotations: one nurses a wound, a child, a hope. So to nurse political dreams is to depict political ambition as not a calculated strategy but as tender, vital care, a calling that precedes and underpins all other activity. temporal circumstance “since an early age” supports the vocation narrative by locating the dream in childhood, making political destiny appear natural rather than learned. This is a classic move in what Martin and Rose (2007) call the ‘life genre’, the biographical narrative which, after the fact, constructs a coherent teleology out of the events of a life.

The ideological peak of the profile is the identifying relational clause C11 ‘an icon of success’. Identification of relational processes creates equivalences between a Token (the person) and a Value (symbolic role or identity) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

The valuation of Hakim Ali Zardari’s ‘icon of success’ is maximally evaluative and minimally specific. It needs no evidence, for it is a social symbol rather than a descriptive statement. This process of identification helps to reinforce a certain interpretation of Zardari’s life that focuses on entrepreneurial and political success, while disregarding the nuances of dynastic politics. As Fairclough (1995) points out, deciding what to say and what not to say is itself an ideological act. The identifying relational clause is the most efficient vehicle for this naturalised evaluation.

4.3. Profile 3: Salman Taseer

4.3.1. Clause Segmentation

Table 6: Clause Segmentation Profile 3: Salman Taseer (Daily Times, 2024)

No.	Segmented Clause Profile 3: Salman Taseer (Daily Times, 2024)
C1	Salman Taseer entered the arena of Pakistani politics as a figure who refused to be defined by its boundaries.
C2	He championed the cause of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman on death row under Pakistan's blasphemy laws.
C3	He publicly challenged the Federal Shariat Court's application of the blasphemy law.
C4	He visited Asia Bibi in prison.
C5	Taseer was the Governor of Punjab at the time of his assassination.
C6	He was assassinated by his own security guard in January 2011.
C7	He believed in a secular, progressive vision of Pakistan.
C8	He represented the crisis of Pakistani liberalism at its most acute.
C9	He knew the personal risk of his public stance.
C10	His assassination silenced one of the most prominent liberal voices in the country.
C11	Taseer remains a contested symbol of liberal politics in Pakistan.

C12	His courage exposed the deep contradictions within Pakistan's political and religious establishment.
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4.3.2. Transitivity Analysis

Table 7: Transitivity Analysis Profile 3: Salman Taseer (Daily Times, 2024)

Clause	Process Type	Participants	Circumstances	Ideological Interpretation
C1: Salman Taseer entered the arena of Pakistani politics as a figure who refused to be defined by its boundaries.	Material	Actor: Salman Taseer; Goal: arena of Pakistani politics	Manner: as a figure who refused to be defined	Entry into politics is framed not as ordinary career progression but as transgressive self-definition. The embedded relative clause constructs anti-conformism as Taseer's foundational political identity.
C2: He championed the cause of Asia Bibi.	Material	Actor: He (Taseer); Goal: the cause of Asia Bibi	None	'Championed' encodes sustained, morally motivated material action. The Goal, a persecuted religious minority woman and amplifies Taseer's heroism through the vulnerability of the person he defended, constructing the profile of a rights-defender.
C3: He publicly challenged the Federal Shariat Court's application of the blasphemy law.	Material	Actor: He (Taseer); Goal: the Court's application of the blasphemy law	Manner: publicly	The circumstance 'publicly' is ideologically decisive. It transforms what might have been private dissent into civic courage. The institutional Goal (a court) amplifies transgressive agency.
C7: He believed in a secular, progressive vision of Pakistan.	Mental (Cognitive)	Senser: He (Taseer); Phenomenon: secular, progressive vision of Pakistan	None	The accumulated evaluative adjectives 'secular, progressive' are not Taseer's own words but the journalist's characterisation, encoded as Taseer's inner conviction through the mental process is a key

				mechanism of ideological ventriloquism in biographical discourse.
C8: He represented the crisis of Pakistani liberalism at its most acute.	Relational (Identifying)	Token: He (Taseer); Value: the crisis of Pakistani liberalism at its most acute	None	Taseer is identified not merely as an individual but as the embodiment of a structural political crisis. This is the most ideologically ambitious relational clause in the corpus: individual biography is dissolved into civilizational diagnosis.
C10: His assassination silenced one of the most prominent liberal voices in the country.	Material	Actor: his assassination [nominalised]; Goal: one of the most prominent liberal voices	Location: in the country	Nominalisation ('his assassination') erases the specific human agent, presenting the killing as an impersonal event. The superlative 'most prominent liberal voice' retroactively crowns Taseer's significance through his loss.

The Taseer profile presents a transitivity profile in which material and relational processes interact to construct a biographical subject who embodies both courageous individual action and civilizational significance. Written thirteen years after Taseer's assassination in 2024, the profile operates retrospectively, constructing Taseer's life as a narrative that was always moving towards a prophesied end. This retrospective teleology is embedded in the transitivity choices throughout.

The first sentence, 'Salman Taseer entered the arena of Pakistani politics as a figure who refused to be defined by its boundaries,' is one of the most complex constructions of a material process. The Goal, or 'the arena of Pakistani politics,' is metaphorical in that it is a space of contest encoded in politics. More importantly, the relative clause, which is embedded in the Actor, 'who refused to be defined by its boundaries,' modifies the Actor. This construction is a bit unusual in terms of grammar: the Actor is defining himself as lacking an external definition. It builds up Taseer's political image as an independent, self-determined, and resistant to the constraints of politics.

The material processes in C2 ('championed the cause of Asia Bibi') and C3 ('publicly challenged the Federal Shariat Court's application of the blasphemy law') present Taseer's most politically impactful acts as a series of sustained, courageous challenges to high-level institutional processes. The Goals, who is a persecuted woman, and the court,

are carefully selected: they highlight the extreme individual vulnerability, the extreme institutional authority, and give the Actor role model in Taseer more heroic value. Publicly in C3 is a circumstantial element that ideologically shifts what might have been a private legal opinion into a civic act of democratic courage.

The identifying relational clause in C8 'He captured the most critical aspect of Pakistani liberalism' is the most adventurous relational identification in the entire corpus. Here, the person and the structural diagnosis of political disease are merged: not just a liberal politician but the personification of the existential crisis of liberalism in Pakistan. The individual is summarised by the type, and the biographical profile turns into a diagnosis of a political state, as Van Dijk (2008) puts it, macrosemantic generalisation. As a noun, rather than a verb with an agent, assassination in the sentence 'His assassination silenced one of the most prominent liberal voices' is nominalised, thus providing an additional layer of ideology.

5. Findings

5.1. Distribution of Process Types

Table 8: Frequency Distribution of Process Types Across the Three Profiles

Process Type	Hashmi (Dawn, 2014) n=12	Zardari (Dawn, 2011) n=12	Taseer (Daily Times, 2024) n=12	Total & Percentage (N=36)
Material	5 (41.7%)	4 (33.3%)	5 (41.7%)	14 (38.9%)
Mental	2 (16.7%)	3 (25.0%)	2 (16.7%)	7 (19.4%)
Relational	2 (16.7%)	2 (16.7%)	3 (25.0%)	7 (19.4%)
Verbal	1 (8.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.8%)
Behavioural	1 (8.3%)	2 (16.7%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (8.4%)
Existential	1 (8.3%)	1 (8.3%)	2 (16.7%)	4 (11.2%)
TOTAL	12 (100%)	12 (100%)	12 (100%)	36 (100%)

5.2. Why Material Processes Dominate?

The plurality of material processes across all three profiles (38.9% of the analysed sample) is not a coincidence of individual authorial style but a generic convention of political biographical discourse. Material processes position the biographical subject as Actor, the initiator of consequential action, which is the grammatical realisation of what we culturally recognise as political agency. The press biography of a political figure is generically committed to demonstrating that the subject has done things that matter, and material processes are the primary grammatical vehicle for this demonstration. What varies across profiles is not the frequency of material processes but the nature of the Goals: Hashmi's material processes encode institutional transgression, Zardari's encode entrepreneurial achievement, and Taseer's encode rights-advocacy. The same process type thus narrates different ideological effects through enabling the specific participant

configurations, a finding that underscores the importance of attending to the full Transitivity configuration rather than process type frequencies alone.

5.3. Mental Processes

Mental processes (19.4%) construct the biographical subject's inner world as the ideological foundation of their outer actions. This grammatical pattern establishes a specific model of political subjecthood: the principled actor who acts from belief rather than strategy. The affective mental process in the Zardari profile ('nursed dreams') and the cognitive mental processes in the Hashmi and Taseer profiles ('believed,' 'knew') all operate to naturalise political commitment as authentic selfhood. As Fairclough (2015) argues, the construction of authentic political identity is a central ideological operation in contemporary political discourse, and the mental process is the grammatical mechanism through which this construction is performed at the level of the clause.

5.4. Relational Processes

Relational processes (19.4%) serve a different purpose from material and mental processes as they do not represent actions or thoughts but assign identities. The identifying relational processes, in particular 'an icon of success,' 'the perennial rebel,' 'the crisis of Pakistani liberalism at its most acute,' are the areas in which the biographical subject is most explicitly transformed into a political symbol. These processes consolidate the narrative meaning of a biographical life into a single evaluative identification, and they represent the most concentrated form of ideological work in the genre. It allows a journalist's personal opinion to be presented as a simple fact or a 'natural' identity, rather than just one person's perspective.

5.5. The Ideological Coherence of the Genre

Overall, these findings suggest that the Pakistani English newspaper biographical profile is a genre that follows a specific "ideological grammar". This structure portrays political figures as active agents of history (through material processes), grounds their actions in authentic conviction (through mental processes), and validates their importance through connections to others (through relational processes). This grammar appears across different newspapers, different political figures, and different historical periods, suggesting that it has become a generic convention, what Fairclough (1995) would call a discursive practice that has become routinised and naturalised. The implications for critical media literacy are significant: readers who are not equipped to verify these grammatical patterns may absorb the political identities they construct as factual descriptions rather than ideological productions.

6. Conclusion

The present study has shown that political biography is a genre in which grammatical choice is a continuous act of ideological construction, as evidenced by systematic clause-level transitivity analysis of three biographical profiles in Pakistani

English newspapers. Informed by Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) Transitivity framework, and interpreted through Fairclough's (1995, 2015) CDA, the analysis reveals three overarching patterns: the dominance of material processes that position politicians as agentive historical actors; the strategic use of mental processes to construct ideological interiority and authentic conviction; and the use of identifying relational processes to dissolve individual biography into political symbolism.

These findings make two unique contributions to the existing scholarship. They adapt SFL-based transitivity analysis to the biographical profile as a specific media genre, theoretically showing that generic conventions operate at the level of Transitivity configuration, not only in the vocabulary or the narrative structure. Empirically, they present detailed, clause-level evidence of how Pakistani English newspapers engage with the ideological construction of political authority, sacrifice and national purpose in ways that reflect their specific conjunctures of production.

The article also shows that transitivity is an instrument of ideological naturalization: through the grammatical encoding of editorial evaluations (participant roles, process types, circumstantial elements) in newspaper biographical discourse, ideologically motivated representations are presented as factual descriptions.

This naturalisation is the grammatical mechanism through which political consent is produced, political myths are reproduced and political identities are consolidated in the public sphere. This finding points to the value of grammatical analysis as part of any complete account of how media language constructs political reality for the study of political communication. It shows for SFL the continued productivity of the Transitivity framework for exposing the ideological dimensions of apparently transparent genres. This study is limited by a number of analytically important parameters. The corpus is restricted to three biographical profiles published in two Pakistani English newspapers, and the findings can not be generalised to the entire spectrum of Pakistani English newspaper discourse, the Urdu media, or the regional language press. The analysis is limited to the Transitivity system of the ideational metafunction, without systematic reference to the interpersonal and textual metafunctions. The study does not explore the production contexts of the profiles, editorial choices, journalist backgrounds, or institutional pressures, which would provide important context for interpreting the identified discursive choices. Finally, the research is limited to written text and does not include the multimodal aspects of biographical profiles (photographs, captions, page layout), which constitute a significant extra dimension of meaning in newspaper discourse.

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