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## Social Power and Textual Strategies

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### Abstract

Language is a crystal being shaped by the society and the rules in a society are mostly under the control of power. Language is a complex system having lots of choices for negotiating meaning which are motivated by the social rules specifically by power. According to Hudson (1980) and Wardhaugh (1986) power can directly be embodied in the choice of pronouns (tu vs. vous), address forms (name only, title and last name) and some other choices from lexicogrammar. The way power is reflected in everyday use of language is crucial and this study attempts to underscore some of the methods the speakers manipulate to express themselves hinting their degree of power to their addressee(s). In order to find the interrelationship between social power and textual strategies this study tries to examine a novelette entitled "The short happy life of Francis Macomber" written by Ernest Hemingway on the basis of Halliday's Systemic-Functional Grammar (1994) and observe the number and length of utterances and turns. In detail the novelette is analyzed according to the number of special process types, the preferred mode type and the length of turns each character with varying degree of power interacts in the story. The analysis shows that the dominant character manipulates more

material process type and imperative mode types, makes utterances and takes longer turns than the dominated one.

**Key Words:** Power- Negotiation of meaning- Halliday's Systemic\_ Functional Grammar- Ideational function- Interpersonal function – Material process- Imperative mode

## **1. Introduction**

All the movements on the socialization of language which was started in 1916 with de Saussure's introduction to language as a system and continued with Malinowsky (1935), Firth (1945) and Hymes (1972) were crystallized into a definite system proposed by Halliday, who believes that language is a complex net of functions being shaped by and give shape to the society. And the rules in a society are mostly under the governing of power. And language is a system having lots of choices for negotiating a meaning which is motivated by social rules especially by power.

### **1.1 Language Metafunctions**

Halliday's (1975) primary classification of language functions was decreased from seven to three as he stated that during the maturation these functions become more complex and fewer because unlike children adult speakers never use mono-functional utterances. He later proposed three macro functions of language including ideational, interpersonal and textual ones. He believes that in serving ideational function, language gives structure to experience and helps determine the speaker's/ writer's way of looking at things whereas interpersonal function deals with the exchanges between two interlocutors and the way the interaction for communication and meaning negotiation takes place. If the exchange has the function of goods and services, it is called offer/command. And in the case of giving or demanding information it is called statement/question.

He further refers to the textual function which enables the speaker/writer to construct texts or connected passages of discourse that is relevant to the situation and enables the listener /reader to distinguish a text from a random set of sentences.

### **1.2 Concept of Power**

Bertrand Russel defines power as the ability to create the desirable effect (1938). He resembles the concept of power in social studies to the concept of energy in physics. In a similar vein Wrong defines power as "The capacity of some persons to produce intended and foreseen effects on others" (Wrong, 1995, p. 2). Power is a goal that all the other facilities like wealth and knowledge become vehicles to achieve it. The lust for power is mostly the motive for social activities. Some people believe that wealth is the man's outmost wish, however in the final position wealth is used to get to the hill of power.

Different scholars refer to different types of power. According to Ivanich (1990) there are two types of power: personal power and privilege power. In his study of power, Fairclough (1989)

states that people can exercise their power in two ways; through coercing others to go along with them or through winning other's acquiescence in their possession and exercise of power.

### **1.2.1 Sources of Power**

Power originates from different sources. To Toffler (1990) the onset of power could be coercion, wealth or knowledge. He believes that coercion is the worst source of the power and somehow the most perilous one for two main reasons:

- It is destructive and against humanity.
- It is under the threat of being revenged.

The second source of power is wealth. Toffler opines that this source is better than the first one in that it is intermediate and flexible, especially when it is used as reward to motivate people to be dominated willingly. The last source, i. e., knowledge, has such features as flexibility, immorality, simultaneous use and uncontrollability which makes it the most desired one. Furthermore, being a knowledgeable person makes one a specific individual.

### **1.2.2. Language and Power**

For Reynold (1990) power to interaction is the same as oxygen to water. In all interactions that take place world widely the question of power differentiation exists. Given the fact that human is a social being, the interaction becomes an integrated facet of social life and the language used in the interaction becomes a tool by which some people dominate others. Thus, the natures of language and power are interwoven and examining one without the other seems improbable.

### **1.3. Research Objectives**

The present study aims to investigate the textual strategies that speakers manipulate to express themselves hinting their degree of power to their addressee(s).

## **2. Research Design**

In order to show the relationship between power and language, i. e., the textualization of power, the authors tried to analyze a novelette by Ernest Hemingway entitled "The short happy life of Francis Macomber" on the basis of two ideational and interpersonal metafunctions discussed in Halliday's Systemic-Functional Grammar (henceforth SFG). The aim is to investigate whether there is a relationship between the degree of power and its textualization or not.

Taking into account the fact that a speaker manipulates different strategies to encode his/her meaning, the number of utterances employed by the three characters in the story as well as the length of each turn taken up by the participants in the verbal interactions were computed. The rationale behind selecting this story for the analysis was:

- The characters come from different social power groups.

- The story is full of verbal interactions which are of great significance for the purpose of the current study.

## 2.1. Data Analysis

In the first stage of the data analysis, the selected text was analyzed from ideational point of view, i.e., the Process types used by the characters were identified. The main concern of the second stage was the mood type of the utterances used by each persona.

The story begins in the middle of dark Africa with three main characters: Francis Macomber, a rich American, Mrs. Macomber, a pretty lady and Mr Wilson, a professional hunter hired by Mr. Macomber to help him in hunting.

The primary impression of the story is that, being a wealthy man and coming from a developed country Mr. Macomber should be the most powerful character in the story, which is reinforced by the title of the story and Mr. Macomber's utterance at the beginning of the story. On the other hand, the fact that Mr. Wilson is a hired hunter downgrades him and underestimates his power level. But as the story proceeds we notice that there are other factors involved in determining the degree of power. The legitimate power of knowing jungle and being a professional hunter is the source of Wilson's power ,i.e., the setting is jungle with lots of dangerous animals and he is able to kill them and helps others survive during the safari.

As the story proceeds, the reader is informed about an adventure that happened in the past during which Wilson rescued Francis by killing a lion. This event retold by Mr. Macomber himself and his gratitude towards Wilson renews the hunter's control over the others. The third character is Mrs. Macomber, a pretty lady whose power mostly originates from her self-awareness of her beauty. But during the expedition, the shift that happens in her power level is outstanding. To consider the power shifts thoroughly we divided the story into four main phases where shifts take place and then tried to reconsider the different process types and their overall differences in each character's utterances in each phase and to observe how power shift changes the textualization of the discourse.

## 3. Results of the Study

On the basis of the data presented in the tables in the first phase Mr. Wilson used 1087 words and 230 processes, 44.78% material type<sup>1</sup>. Whereas the beginner of the story is Mr. Macomber, Wilson is the most powerful character in the first phase. He speaks more than others and takes longer turns. In this phase Mrs. Macomber unlike Mr. Wilson uses more relational<sup>2</sup> and mental<sup>3</sup> processes which can be attributed to her passiveness and powerlessness. In the second phase, the highest percentage of the material process used by Wilson belongs to his interactions with Mr. Macomber (47.27%). At this phase Wilson is cautious, conservative and silent against Mrs. Macomber (0% material process). Instead she uses seven out of nine material processes as she talks with Wilson because she knows something about his illegal hunts and if she reveals them he may lose his job as well as his hunting license.

<sup>1</sup>Material Process is the process of doing and happening and is used to express the notion that some entity 'does' something.

<sup>2</sup>Relational process signals that a relationship between two participants is set up.

<sup>3</sup>Halliday (1994) groups together clauses of feeling, thinking and perceiving under Mental process.

In the third phase which is the shortest one, Mr. Macomber by killing three buffalos recovers his courage and tries to reestablish his power over his wife (9 out of 10 material process). But again Mr. Wilson is the most powerful one by 50.8% material process.

The last phase is totally different one because Mr. Macomber is absent and all the interactions take place between Wilson and Mrs. Macomber. This phase begins with the death of Mr. Macomber. This is the climax of the story when Mrs. Macomber kills her husband pretending or truly trying to kill the buffalo that attacks him. In this phase Wilson is an absolute symbol of power. After the death of Mr. Macomber, his wife is engaged in an abnormal interaction with Wilson who accuses her for killing her husband deliberately. Wilson, using 14 Material processes tries to scold her in an authoritative manner. Here she is in her lowest degree of power. Repetition of "Stop it" a verbal process<sup>4</sup> eight times obviously refers to her powerlessness and helplessness.

In the second stage of the analysis, the utterances, used by each character, were investigated for the special mood type. Having identified the utterances of each character, different mood types of declarative and interrogative were distinguished.

The results of the analysis show that Wilson used more imperatives than others. An interesting fact is that he used almost all of them addressing Mr. Macomber rather than Mrs. Macomber. This can be interpreted as his respect for her femininity, beauty and courage when she insists on going hunting. The high percentage of WH and Yes/ No interrogatives (21.81%) used by Mr. Macomber shows his lack of knowledge in this new setting. An interesting finding is that the percentage of imperatives used by Mrs. Macomber (15.11%) is equal to the percentage of the imperatives used by Wilson in his speech (15.11%). A close look reveals that the repetition of imperative " Stop it" 8 times in the last phase is not a power –driven imperative, rather it shows Mrs. Macomber' request for stopping a bothersome verbiage. On the other hand, imperative form, the manifestation of power in language, has the lowest percentage in Mr. Macomber's utterances since his is coward," I bolted like a rabbit." Throughout the story he uses imperative just once to address Wilson (0.6%).

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<sup>4</sup>Verbal process is the process of saying. It covers any kind of symbolic exchange of meaning.

Table 1. Frequency of Different Process types in Phase 1

Pro. Char.	Mat.	Ment.	Rel.	Beh.	Verbal	Exist.	Total
Mr Wilson	103	37	61	22	6	1	230
	95   8	35   2	53   8	20   2	5   1	1   0	209   21
	44.78%	16.08%	26.52%	9.56%	2.60%	0.63%	
Mr Macomber	36	20	30	8	3	1	98
	29   7	18   2	21   9	8   0	2   1	1   0	79   19
	36.73%	20.40%	30.41%	8.16%	3.06%	1.0%	
Mrs Macomber	18	17	28	2	2	1	68
	8   10	9   8	13   15	1   1	1   1	0   1	32   36
	26.47%	25%	41.17%	2.94%	2.94%	1.47%	

Table 2. Frequency of Different Process types in Phase 2

Pro. Char.	Mat.	Men.	Rel.	Beh.	Verbal	Exist.	Total
Mr Wilson	17	3	9	3	3	1	36
	17   0	3   0	7   2	3   0	2   1	1   0	33   3
	47.27%	8.33%	25%	8.33%	8.33%	2.77%	
Mr Macomber	10	7	10	11	4	3	45
	4   6	3   4	4   6	1   10	2   2	1   2	15   30
	22.22%	15.55%	22.22%	24.44%	8.88%	6.66%	
Mrs Macomber	9	14	8	8	2	2	43
	2   7	1   13	0   8	0   8	0   2	0   2	3   40
	20.93%	32.55%	18.60%	4.65%	4.65%	4.65%	

Table 3. Frequency of Different Process types in Phase 3

Pro. Char.	Mat.	Ment.	Rel.	Beh.	Verbal	Exist.	Total
Mr Wilson	62	15	23	14	6	2	122
	54   8	13   2	20   3	13   1	5   1	2   0	107   15
	50.8%	12.29%	18.85%	11.47%	4.9%	1.63%	
Mr Macomber	10	11	11	1	0	0	33
	9   1	9   2	8   3	0   1	0   0	0   0	26   <b>7</b>
	30.30%	33.33%	33.33%	3.03%	0%	0%	
Mrs Macomber	4	7	8	1	2	1	23
	3   1	4   3	5   3	1   0	2   0	1   0	16   <b>7</b>
	17.39%	30.43%	34.78%	4.34%	8.69%	4.34%	

Table 4. Frequency of Different Process types in Phase 4

Pro. Char.	Mat.	Ment.	Rel.	Beh.	Verbal	Exist.	Total
Mr Wilson	14	7	12	2	1	3	39
	35.89%	17.94%	30.75%	5.12%	2.56%	7.69%	
Mrs Macomber	0	0	0	0	8	0	8
	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	

Table 5 illustrates the total number of different Mood types used by each persona in the story.

Table 5. Different Mood types

	Declarative	Yes/ No Interrogative	Wh-Interrogative	Exclamation	Imperative
Mr Wilson	289	16	7	0	59
	77.47%	4.28%	1.87%	0%	15.81%

Mr Mac.	144 73.09%	21 10.65%	22 11.16%	1 0.50%	9 4.56%
Mrs Mac.	99 71.22%	8 5.75%	10 7.19%	1 0.71%	21 15.11%

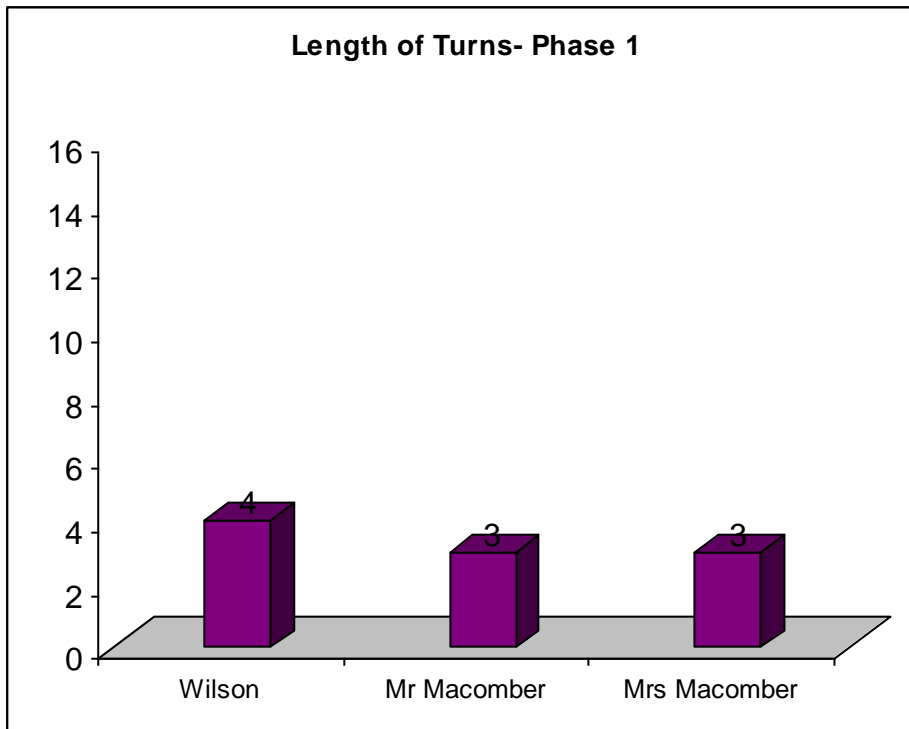


Figure 1. Length of Turns in Phase 1



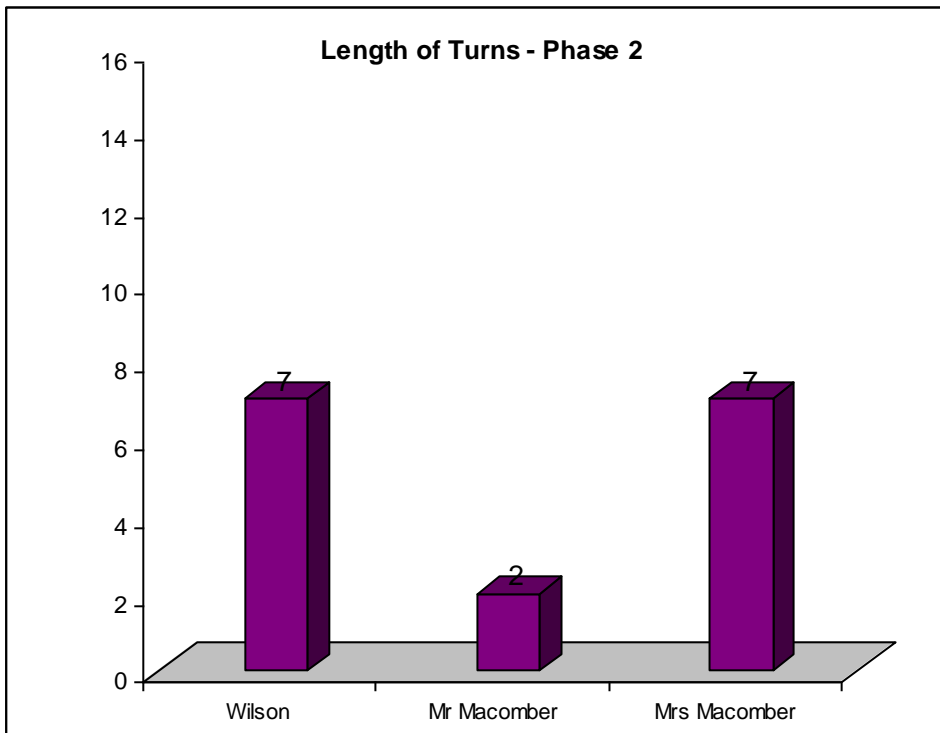


Figure 2. Length of Turns in Phase 2

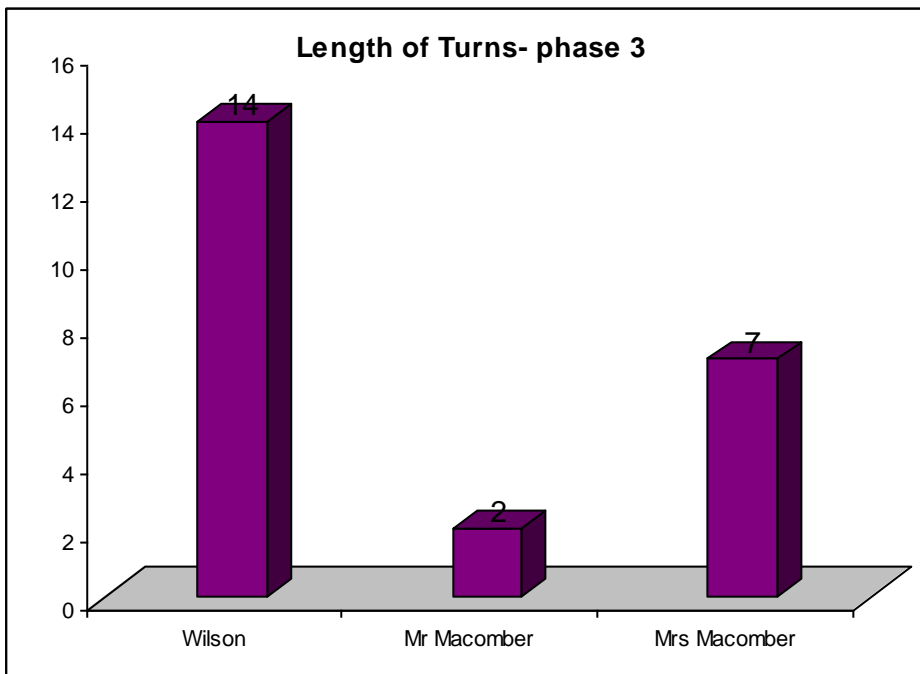


Figure 3. Length of Turns in Phase 3

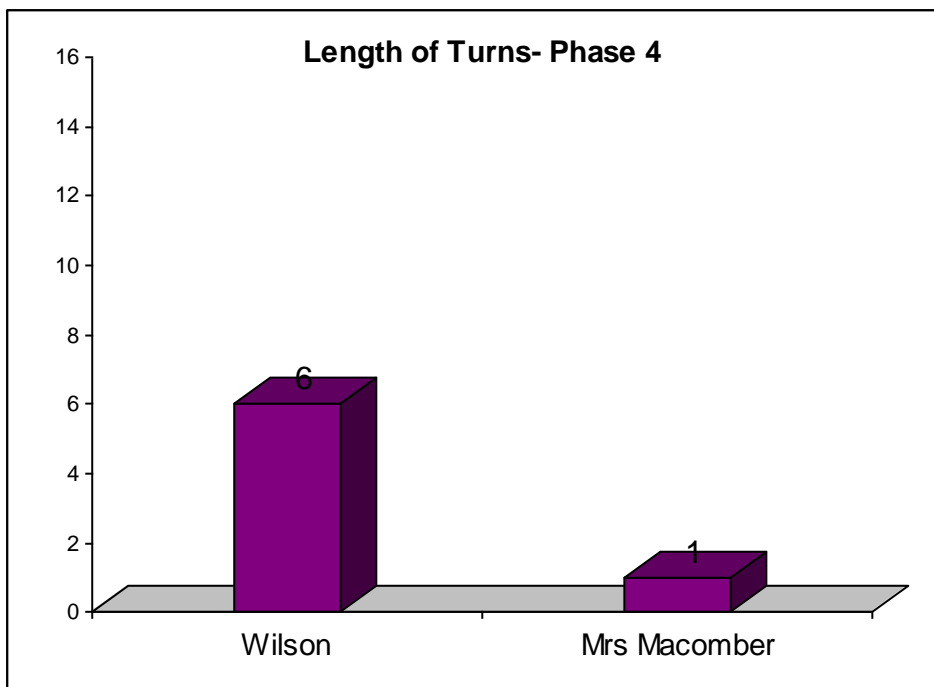


Figure 4. Length of Turns in Phase 4

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

This study aimed to underscore the relationship between social power originated from different sources and their textual manifestations in everyday verbal interactions. The attempt was to generalize the outcome of the analyzed story, hoping that such a generalization will hold true for differences in the degree and types of power and their textual manifestations.

The analysis of the story from transitivity point of view within ideational function of language proved that the powerful persona used material processes more than others. If we generalize the point, we can claim that material process shows activity rather than passivity existing in mental and relational process types. These are preferred strategies used by those who feel more power in everyday interactions. Throughout the story the less powerful characters used more relational process which represents their passiveness and helplessness.

The second point that should be highlighted is the use of direct commands or imperatives manipulated mostly by powerful characters. And finally, it is observed that the powerful characters take more and longer turns. To control the situation one should harness it, and by taking floor and having long turns it is achievable.

#### 5. Implications

Nowadays, emphasis on the communicative approaches to language teaching demands much attention to one of the most decisive social factors, i. e., power. It means that we should revise teaching methods and teaching materials by focusing on the authenticity and importance of power in social interaction.

On the other hand, power factors can affect the translation process. Power makes language change, so the form of the language by varying degree of power changes and as the textualization and production changes, the reproduction, i.e., translation, should change as well. In the translation process a translator should observe not only the meaning and function of the source language, but also the way in which something is uttered. So studying and identifying the power markers in language will certainly help the translator be aware of the tiny changes in textualization of the source language and try to find the most accurate equivalents in the target language.

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