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Reversed Gender Roles and Linguistic Choices: A Transitivity Analysis of Gender Disparities in Ali's *The Stone Woman*

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ABSTRACT

The present study is a critique of the language used in a literary text i.e., *The Stone Woman* (2000) written by Tariq Ali, a famous Pakistani-British writer in order to find out gender disparities through transitivity analysis. For the purpose two characters, Nilofer and Selim, the female and male participants of romance scenes are selected. Following a mixed method approach, the study has collected fifty clauses as sample through purposive sampling. The greater number of clauses i.e., thirty clauses used to represent the female while the lesser number i.e., twenty clauses for the male show a biased attitude of the writer. The analysis shows that the female is described through a maximum use of all the four identified types of clauses: fifty-eight percent material, sixty percent mental, sixty-seven percent behavioral and sixty-seven percent verbal. In comparison to this the clauses used to describe the male appear with lesser frequency: forty-two percent material, forty percent mental, and thirty-three percent behavioral and verbal each. Moreover, the allocation of the participants' roles with power and authority are mostly reserved for the female: fifty-eight percent actor ,sixty percent senser , sixty-seven percent sayer while the male is shown less active through maximum fifty-nine percent goal and sixty seven percent receiver roles. The findings of the study clearly show that Nilofer is more dominant and authoritative in the romance scenes as compared to Selim who is reluctant and acts only when he is encouraged by the female. Hence, the study finds that the traditionally reserved gender roles are reversed in Ali's *The Stone Woman.*

| **KEYWORDS** | Gender, Participants' Roles, Processes, The Stone Woman(TSW), Transitivity |

Introduction

Narrative writing always carries and conveys a number of world views about a number of different notions and aspects. These world views work either to propagate or reshape the existing ideologies and norms within a society. Gender is a particular phenomenon that can be fabricated by a number of structures including linguistic structures. The novelists especially those writing about the relationships between women and men use language to convey a particular gender ideology to their readers. The feminists through feminist literary criticism raised the question of the use of language to represent women and it was generally believed that the male writers mostly represent women negatively by highlighting their emotional weaknesses, their oppressed, passive and weak position. The present study with a focus on romance scenes where one female and one male character participate, analyzes the use of transitivity choices to see how Ali (2000), a male novelist, presents his male and female characters.

Literature Review

The portrayal of characters in literary texts has been analyzed form transitivity perspective by a number of linguists and language researchers (Burton, 1982; Kennedy, 1982; Montgomery, 1993; Simpson, 2003; Rodrigues, 2008; and Mwinlaaru, 2012). Likewise, Ji & Shen (2004) utilized transitivity framework to analyze the language use in a

novel titled *The Double Hook.* Some researchers like Leavy (2000), Lange (2008), Machaba (2011), Shah et al., (2014) and Qasim, et al., (2018) have seen the depiction of women characters in selected literary texts. A comparative study of male and female representation in literary text through transitivity choices was carried out by Qasim, et al. (2018) where they found how linguistic choices carry the stereotypical gender ideas prevalent in the society. Likewise, a study carried out to see the representation of Afghan women through transitivity choices found that women in literary texts are projected as submissive creatures. The present study is a good contribution in the scholarly literature related to transitivity analysis where it focuses on one female and one male characters participating in the romance scenes in the selected literary text, *The Stone Woman*, a novel by Ali (2000). In order to analyze the selected characters, the study utilizes the transitivity framework as suggested by Halliday (1985) while Mills (1995) insights regarding gender and transitivity are also taken into consideration to analyze the data. The analysis of the transitivity choices in a literary text helps the readers and researches to get the message of any text as Bloor and Bloor (2013) claimed that the use of language is a reflection of certain perceptions of reality. And according to Halliday (1994), these transitivity choices reflect the reality through a projection of different types of processes including the processes of doing, sensing, feeling, being and becoming. Three components of this transitivity system given by Halliday (1985) are as: the processes, the participants of these processes and the circumstances associated with these processes and participants. These processes, participants and circumstances are identified through verbal groups, nominal groups and the prepositional phrases or adverbial groups (Halliday, 1985; Eggins, 2004; Simpson, 2004; Thompson, 2013). The present study analyzes transitivity choices used to describe two characters in accordance with Mills' (1995) idea that transitivity choices are "primarily concerned with the roles of human participants" (Mills, 1995 as cited in Figueiredo, 2008). Moreover, the processes which are described as the nucleus of the clause by Mwinlaaru (2012) are also analyzed with reference to verbal groups. For a neat and logical analysis, the selected text is divided into clauses gender wise and then analysis is mainly concerned with the identified processes because these show the context and situations which are represented in a text (Qasim, 2016).

Material and Methods

In order to carry out a systematic analysis, the researchers followed a mixed method research design in this study. Drawing on both the quantitative and qualitative paradigms, the study tries to reach at significant results. The mixed method design assists the researchers to present the processes and participants roles frequency wise helping in drawing the functions and meaning of these choices to be discussed and interpreted qualitatively.

The data for the present study have been collected in the form of clauses form *The Stone Woman* (TSW). Only those clauses were considered as data that appeared in romance scenes between Nilofer and Sleim. A total number of 50 clauses were taken as data to be analyzed and interpreted according to processes and participant roles allocated to each character. For the purpose a close reading of the novel was carried out and the romance scenes with these characters were highlighted. These selected extracts were then utilized to extract clauses for each gender where 30 clauses noted to be used for the female character while 20 clauses were identified to portray the male character. These identified clauses are then reproduced and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The frequency count of each process type and participant roles is presented in the form of percentage and tabulated in table form. These statistically significant results helped to determine the differences in the presentation of female and male characters in the text. These percentages with which both the genders are depicted in the text are interpreted based on the contextual interpretations then. Hence, the study adopted a systematic methodology by following steps i.e., close reading of the text, marking of romance scenes with Selim and Niolfer as participants, identification of clauses for each character, division of clauses based on types of processes and participant roles gender wise, analysis of transitivity choices used for each

character separately and finally a comparison between female and male representation was carried out by using a graphical representation of the data and interpretation in the form of words.

Results and Discussion

With an aim to find out how female and male characters are represented through the patterns of transitivity, the present study has taken into consideration only those romance scenes from the novel where two participants i.e., Selim, a male character and Nilofer, a female character were participating. Nilofer is the narrator of the incidents and happenings in the novel. Hence, in the selected extracts "I" refers to Nilofer while Selim is described by her as "he" or "Selim". All the clauses from these related scenes were extracted and only the relevant clauses which described these two characters were selected as a sample. Thus, a sample size of 50 clauses was taken for analysis from these scenes. Out of these 50 clauses, the material clauses outnumber other clauses with a frequency of 66% while verbal clauses appear to be the second most frequent clauses with 18% occurrences. The other clauses that appear in the text for these characters are mental (10%) and behavioral (6%) as shown in Figure 1. The use of maximum number of material clauses shows that these selected scenes show the characters through their actions mostly.
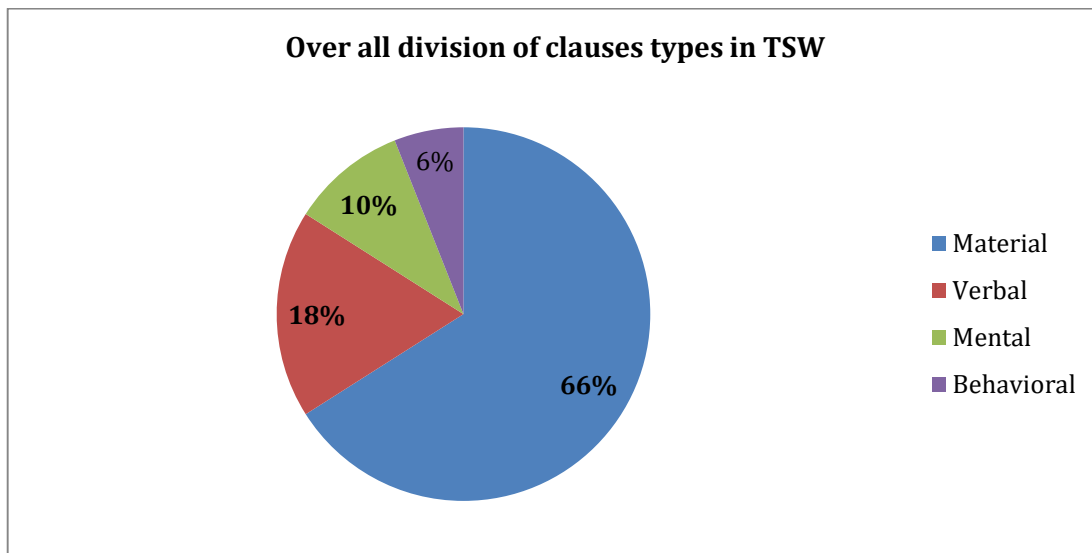

Figure 1: Graphical division of clauses types in TSW

The gender wise division of these clauses shows a disparity between the representation of male and female characters where maximum clauses i.e., 30 (60%) are allotted to Nilofer, the female character while Selim, the male, is given only 20 (40%) clauses. Other than an imbalanced division of clauses for each gender, it is important to note the division of processes types and participants' roles as well to see the attitude of the writer towards the gender depiction. Table 1 presents an over view of the division of these identified processes and participants gender wise. The data have shown that four types of processes i.e., material, mental, behavioral and verbal are used for these characters where maximum processes are used to represent the female character while the male is allotted with fewer processes as given in Table 1. Likewise, the division of participant roles also shows a disparity between gender depictions. With a reference to these identified processes and participants 'roles gender wise as given in Table 1, the following sections discuss the representation of two selected characters i.e., Nilofer and Selim to find out the attitude of the novelist towards gender depiction.

Table 1

Processes and Participants Roles in TSW

Processes	Nilofer (F)	Selim (M)	Total	Participants Roles	Nilofer (F/FBP)	Selim (M/MBP)	Total
Material	58%	42%	100%	**Actor**	58%	42%	100%
				Goal	41%	59%	100%
Mental	60%	40%	100%	**Senser**	60%	40%	100%
Behavioral	67%	33%	100%	**Behaver**	67%	33%	100%
Verbal	67%	33%	100%	**Sayer**	67%	33%	100%
				Receiver	33%	67%	100%

Note: (F= female, M= male, FBP=Female body part, MBP= Male body part)

Transitivity Analysis of Nilofer (F) in TSW

While analyzing the processes types allotted to these characters, it is noted that the female character, Nilofer, is described through material processes in maximum cases. Out of 30 clauses used to describe her character, she is shown in action through 19 material clauses that shows her an active participant in the action of the story related to romance scenes. The analysis of these material clauses attached to Nilofer shows her lustful and bold nature where she does not resist the advances of the male, Selim, towards her. For example, in "*I did not resist*" (clause 1) and "*I offered no resistance*" (clause 30), her inaction highlights her submission to her lover, Selim where she wishes him to advance in this love making scene. Moreover, the clause which indicates her action regarding her resistance "*I made a halfhearted attempt to restrain his ardour*" (clause 2) again highlights her lustful nature where she is willing to fall a prey to his passion.

1. **I** *did not resist.*   =material
   (actor=female)

2. **I** *made a half hearted attempt* to restrain his ardour.   =material (actor=female)

3. I *wished* him to go further.   =mental (senser= female)

4. **I** *kissed* **his eyes.**   =material (actor=female) (goal=MBP)

5. **[I** *kissed*] **his lips.**   =material (actor=female) (goal=MBP)

6. **[I]***undressed* **him.**   =material (actor=female) (goal=male)

7. **I** *had made love* to **him.**   =material (actor=female) (goal=male)

8. **I** *stroked* **his hair.**   =material (actor=female) (goal=MBP)

9. **I** *laughed.*   = behavioral (behaver =female)

10. **I** *hugged* **him.**   =material (actor=female) (goal=male)

11. **I** *suggested*.   =verbal (sayer=female) (receiver=male)

12. **I** *answered*.   =verbal (sayer=female) (receiver=male)

13. **I** *knew* what had to be done.   =mental (senser= female)

14. **I** *said* to **him**.   =verbal (sayer=female) (receiver=male)

15. **I** *started walking* back towards the house.   =material (actor=female)

16. **I** *pinched* **him** hard **on his buttock**.   =material (actor=female) (goal= MBP)

17. [I] *pushed* **him** through the door.   =material (actor=female) (goal= MBP)

18. **I** *entered* my bedchamber.   =material (actor=female)

19. **[I]** *pulled* **him** in behind me.   =material (actor=female) (goal=male)

20. **I** *said* in a normal voice.   =verbal(sayer=female) (receiver=male)

21. **I** *threw* down my clothes.   =material (actor=female)

22. **[I]** *undressed* **Selim**.   =material (actor=female) (goal=male)

23. **I** *was looking out* of the window.   = behavioral (Behaver =female)

24. **I** *felt.*   =mental (senser= female)

25. **I** *screamed.*   =verbal (sayer=female) (receiver=male)

26. as **I** *asked*   =verbal (sayer=female) (receiver=male)

27. **I** *put* my hand between **his legs**.   =material (actor=female) (goal= MBP)

28. **[I]** *felt* an **old friend** rise.   =material (actor=female) (goal= MBP)

29. **I** *mounted* **him**.   =material (actor=female) (goal=male)

30. **I** *offered* no resistance.   =material (actor=female)

The bold nature of the woman is further highlighted where she is shown to be involved in bold actions. The material verbs that show Nilofer's actions are: "*kissed*", *"kissed",* "*undressed*", *made love*", "*stroked*", "*hugged*", "*started walking*", "*pinched*", "*pushed*", "*entered*", "*pulled*", "*threw*", "*undressed*", "*put*", "*felt*", "*mounted*" in clauses 4,5,6,7,8,10,15,16,17,18,19,21, 22,27,28,29 and 30 respectively. These processes show that the woman in the text is given a powerful role where she acts most of the time. The second most frequent clauses that are used to describe Nilofer are verbal clauses which appear for six times in the selected texts. These verbal processes show her active participation in the ongoing dialogue and action where she "suggested", "*answered*", "*said*", "*said*" and "*asked*" as shown in clauses 11, 12, 14, 20 and 26. However, in clause 25 the verbal process of screaming is allotted to the female but this screaming is not the result of any pain or oppression. Instead, it shows her bewildered state when her lover surprised her by touching her suddenly. The third most frequent category of transitivity choices is the use of mental processes that show the thoughts and the inner state of the characters. Nilofer's wish to be loved by her lover is highlighted when she "*wished him to go further*" (clause 3). The text thus is describing the willingness of the female to be loved by her male lover. Furthermore, the bold and authoritative nature of Nilofer is also revealed through mental process "knew" where she narrates for herself that "*I knew what had to be done*" (clause 13). These examples of transitivity choices hint at the course of the events where the female manages to command the passion and movements of the male according to her own will and way. Such a depiction where the female leads the actions and manages the way and place to make love gives her an authoritative position. The female is also described through her confident and carefree behavior through behavioral processes like "*laughed*" and "*looking out*" in clauses 9 and 23 respectively. The behavioural processes related to watching or looking hint at the mental ability of a character as claimed by Halliday (1985) that these verbs are a 'half-way house' between mental and material processes'. Two behavioral processes (clause 1 & 9) highlight the behavior of the female. In clause 1, the verb '*watching*' highlights the conscious being of the woman. Such a behavioral process does not involve an action but it is a 'half-way house'

between mental and material processes' as described by Halliday (1985). Behavioral process construes physiological and psychological (human) behavior- mental and verbal behavior (Thompson, 2013). Hence, the woman's act of watching involves not only the mere act of looking but it also serves to highlight her thinking ability.

Other than processes, the participants' roles allotted to any character in a text are also important to note to see the attitude of the writer towards gender depiction. By analyzing these participants' roles, the quality of the processes can be determined as suggested by Mills (1995). Niolfer is projected as an actor in 58% cases while she is described as the receiver of actions in only 41 % cases in the role of the goal. Such a description shows her in a more active position rather than in a position of being acted upon. Likewise, the maximum sayer roles i.e., 67 % allotted to her indicate her authoritative position where she gives voice to her thoughts while she is the receiver of male's voice in only 33 % cases. Furthermore, she is also described through her behavioral (67%) and senser (60%) roles as a thoughtful and confident person. The descriptions where she is described as acting upon the male or the male body parts designate her to a position of active character. For example, in instances where she kissed "*his eyes*" (clause 4) and "his lips" (clause 5); stroked "his hair" (clause 8); pinched (clause16), pushed (clause 17) and pulled (clause 19) "him"; and felt "an old friend rise" show how a female acted upon either a male or a male body part (MBP). These examples from the text refute traditional notions that the acts of touching, kissing and embracing are reserved for the males only (Qasim et al., 2018). Hence, the study proves that such gendered reserved roles are found to be reversed by Ali (2000) in his TSW where his woman character, Niolfer, is also shown to be engaged in all these activities.

Transitivity Analysis of Selim (M) in TSW

The analysis of processes used to describe the male show that the male is described through fewer processes as compared to the female. The female was described through a total number of 30 clauses as discussed in previous section while male is presented through 20 clauses. These clauses in relation to identified processes types and participants' roles are analyzed as under:

31. **Selim** *moved* closer.   =material
    (actor=male)

32. [**he**] *stroked* **my cheeks.**   =material (actor=male) (goal=FBP)

33. **He** *felt* **my breasts**.   =material (actor=male) (goal=FBP)

34. **He** *rested* his head in **my lap.**   =material (actor=male) (goal=FBP)

35. **He** *held* **me** in a tight embrace.   =material (actor=male) (goal=FBP)

36. **He** *sensed* my hesitation.   =mental (senser= male)

37. **He** *asked* in a whisper.   =verbal (sayer=male)

38. **he** *said.*   =verbal
    (sayer=male)

39. **he** *stopped.*   =material (actor=male)

40. [**he**] *refusing* to move forward.   =material (actor=male)

41. [**his**] **two gentle hands** *cupping* **my breasts.**   =material (actor=MBP) (goal=FBP)

42. [**his**] **hands** <u>covered </u>**my mouth.**   =material (actor= MBP) (goal=FBP)

43. **He** <u>did.</u>   =material (actor=male)

44. **He** <u>whispered. </u>   =verbal
   (sayer=male)

45. **he** <u>put </u>his arms around **me**.   =material (actor=male) (goal=FBP)

46. **I** <u>think </u>we should refrain.   =mental (senser= male)

47. **I** will <u>leave.</u>   =material (actor=male)

48. **He** <u>began to laugh.</u>   = behavioural (behaver = male)

49. **his lips** <u>sought </u>**my nipples**.   =material (actor= MBP) (goal=FBP)

50. **His hands** <u>had begun to wander</u> across **my body**.   =material (actor= MBP) (goal=FBP)

The transitivity analysis of the clauses used for the male shows that he, too, is described through a maximum number of material clauses where he is described through his actions like "*moved*", "*stroked*", "*felt*", "*rested*", "*held*", "*stopped*", "*refusing*", "*cupping*", "*covered*", "*did*", "*put*", "*leave*", "*sought*" and "*begun*" in clauses 31,32,33,34,35,39,40,41,42,43,45,47,49 and 50 respectively. These actions allocated to the male in these romance scenes present him an active character who does action. The verbal process "*felt*" apparently appears to fall in mental process but in the selected text it serves as a material process where it shows the action of touching carried out by Selim as in "*he* **felt** *my breasts*" (clause 33). Likewise, in "*his lips***sought***my nipples*" (clause 49) "*sought*" refers to the physical action carried out by the male where he is engaged in a physical action of love making. The male though is described as an active participant through these material processes, yet he is also described as a reluctant character as well. In comparison to the bold nature of Nilofer, the female, Selim, the male, is shown to be afraid or reluctant in his advances as given in material clause "*[he]* **refusing** *to move forward*" (clause 40). Instead, it appears that he follows the instructions given to him by his female partner as Nilofer narrates "*he did (as I asked him)*" in clause 43. Other than these material processes, Selim is also described through two mental processes "*sensed*" and "*think*". The male is described as a good judge through mental clause **"He**sensed *my hesitation*" (clause 36) where he judges the condition of the female. But in the second mental clause "*I* **think** *we should refrain*" (clause 46), he is shown to be a person who is reluctant. The three verbal processes allotted to him are "*asked*", "*said*" and "*whispered*" as given in clauses 37, 38 and 44 respectively. Only behavioral process allocated to him is "*laugh*" (clause 48) which shows his submission to the intentions of the female. It also hints at his lustful nature where he began to laugh and got engaged in carrying out the physical action of love making.

In order to delve deeply into the quality of these processes through which Selim is described, it is necessary to examine the participants' roles allotted to him in the selected clauses. Table 1 summarizes the roles allotted to him in these clauses where he is an actor in 42% cases where he acts. In comparison to his 42% actor roles, he is designated with goal role in maximum cases i.e., 59 %. Hence, he is the receiver of female's actions in 59 % cases while the female is affected by his actions in only 41 % cases. He acts upon either the female as whole in two cases (clauses 35, 45) or he acts upon the female's body parts like her "*cheeks*" (clause 32), "*breast*" (clause 33), "*lap*" (clause 34), "*breasts*" (clause 41), "*mouth*" (clause 42), "*nipples*" (clause 49), and "*body*" (clause 50). His other roles are: senser (40%), behaver (33%), sayer (33%) and receiver (677%). The role in which he appears with maximum cases is the role of receiver where he listens to the female when she tells, asks or

commands him to do something. Hence, the male is not the initiator of the actions in this text. Instead, he is instigated by the female to listen, act and follow her.

Transitivity Choices: A Comparison of Nilofer (F) and Selim (M)

The analysis of processes used to describe the male show that the male is described through fewer processes as compared to the female. Out of total 50 clauses, the female is described through a total number of 30 clauses while the male is presented through 20 clauses .Other than this difference in number of clauses allocated to each, the difference in the division and types of processes is also noted. Figure 2 presents an overview of the process types with a division of these identified types gender wise. The figure indicates that both the characters are described through material, mental, behavioral and verbal processes but with a different frequency. It can be observed that Nilofer (F) is described through a greater number of clauses in all the types of processes which hint at her active participation in the selected scenes. Nilofer is more active as she is described through 58% material processes while Selim is less active in comparison to her where he carries lesser material processes i.e., 42 %. Likewise, the unequal distribution of mental processes (60% for female and 40% for male), behavioral processes and verbal processes (67 % for female and 33 % for male in each case) where female is described through greater number of processes portrays her as the more active, alert and authoritative character in the text.
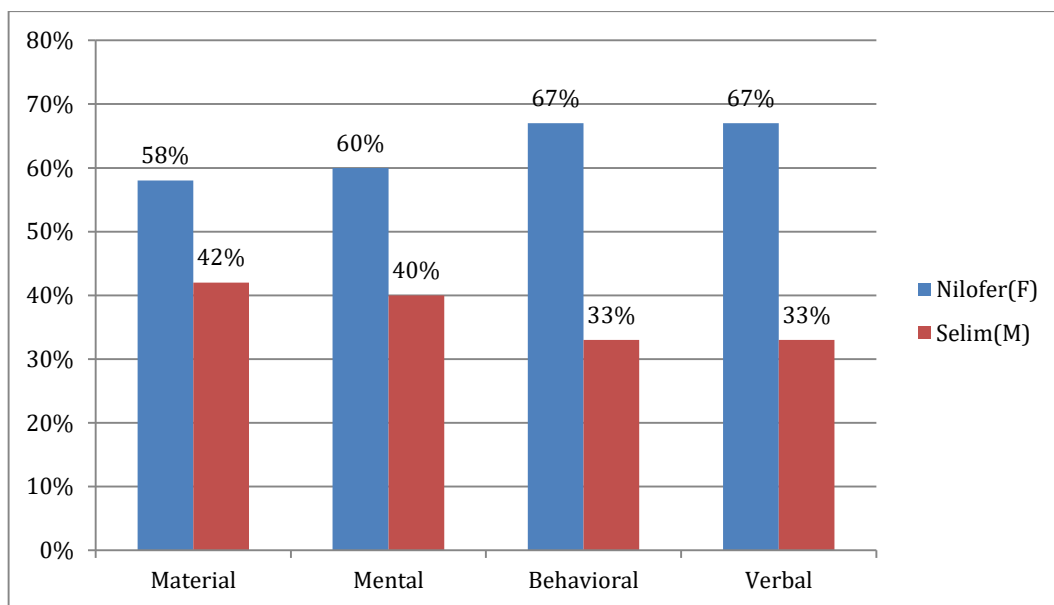

Figure 2: Processes types Fe/male wise in TSW

The discussion related to the quality of participants' roles as discussed in relevant sections in the study and the findings related to the frequencies of these roles for each gender indicate that the female is described in the control of the action. Figure 3 presents a division of these roles percentage wise. The maximum actor roles (58%) carried out by the female and the maximum goal roles (59%) taken by the male show that the female is the doer of the actions in maximum cases while the male is the receiver of the actions mostly. Moreover, the inner thoughts and the behavior of the female are also highlighted through a maximum number of her senser (60%) and behaver role i.e., 67%. Contrary to this, the male is described through lesser senser roles (40%) while his behavior is also shown through 33% roles only. Such a depiction brings the female into the limelight while the male is given less importance in the text. This finding of the researcher is further substantiated through the analysis of sayer and receiver roles in the selected clauses. The unequal distribution of sayer roles for female (67%) and male (33%) indicates that woman is given more chances to utter her feelings where she asks and commands the male to follow her. Likewise, the

distribution of receiver roles where the male is the receiver (67%) in maximum cases while the female is the receiver in only 33% cases again shows how the text gives the woman more authority and space to act and speak. Such a depiction challenges the stereotypical representation of passive and silent women. Instead, Ali (2000) has projected his female character, Nilofer as an active, bold and authoritative lady as far as the romance scenes selected for the study are concerned.
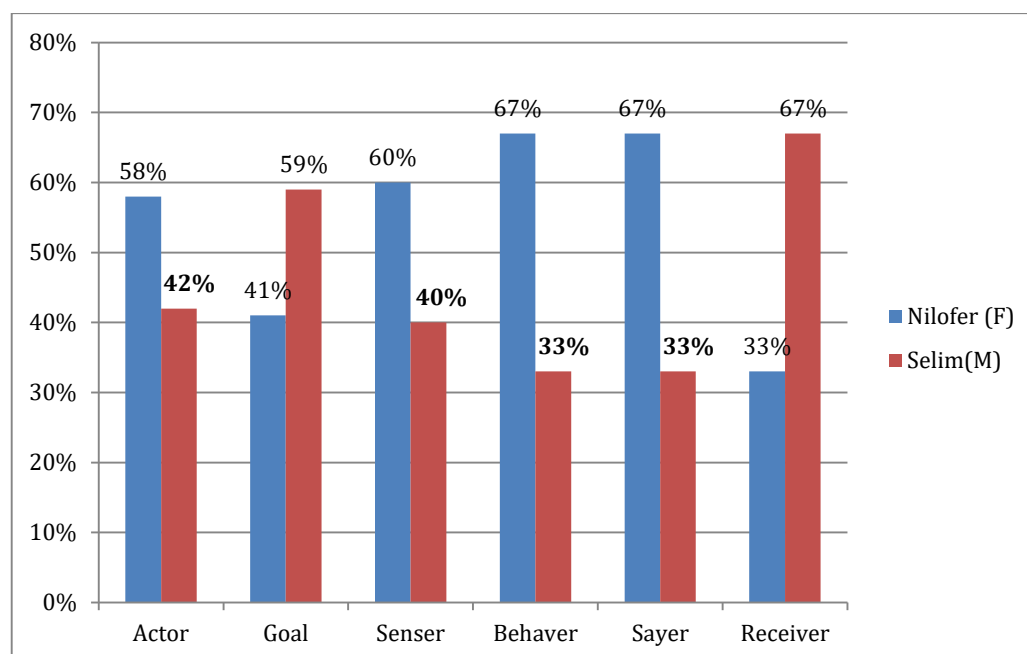

Figure 3: Participants Roles Fe/male wise in TSW

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and findings of the study, the researchers claim that Ali (2000) in his *The Stone Woman* has depicted his female character, Niolfer, as an active and dominant character that does most of the actions as shown through maximum material processes (58%). The male character, Selim, on the other hand carries only 42 % material processes. Likewise, the maximum goal roles (59%) and receiver roles (67%) allotted to the male relegates his position just to a receiver of the actions carried out by the female character. Such a depiction of bold and active woman who participates in the action and even initiates the actions refutes the previous claims that consider the females as the emotion-driven subjects to men: they feel rather than do. They do not act, but are acted upon (Carter & Nash, 1990, as cited in Hubbard, 1994, p. 222). The study also maintains the utility of transitivity analysis in interpreting a text in relation to the meaning that it conveys. In conclusion, it is expected that the analysis of findings of the present study will be helpful in developing an understanding of how gendered ideologies can be communicated and even refuted through the use of linguistic choices in literary texts. The study is aimed to gear up further studies to interpret and carry out the linguistic analysis of literary texts to determine the relationship between language, gender and society from a number of different perspectives.

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