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# LINGUISTIC CHOICES AND GENDER VARIATIONS IN SAUDI HIGHER EDUCATION DISCOURSE: A TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS OF DEANS' MESSAGES

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examines the linguistic choices and gender variations in academic written discourse by analyzing two deans' messages, one written by a male and the other by a female, within a Saudi university context. Guided by Halliday's transitivity system within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study addresses a gap in the literature regarding gender differences in academic texts authored by higher education faculty. The researcher employed both quantitative and qualitative analyses to examine the transitivity process types and gender variation in the two texts. The findings showed the presence of four transitivity processes: material, relational, mental, and existential. The male dean utilized all four processes, whereas the female dean used only material, relational, and mental processes. Material processes were the most frequently used by both, followed by relational and mental processes. The existential process appeared only once in the male deans' message. The quantitative analysis revealed no statistically significant effect of gender on the use of the process types ( $t = 1.05$ ,  $p = 0.34$ ). However, the qualitative analysis uncovered notable differences in how each dean used the language. By employing material processes with limited use of relational and mental processes, the male dean's message emphasized the college's identity and achievements, reflecting an objective and distanced tone through the use of passive voice, abstract and third-person participants. In contrast, the female dean utilized material processes with more frequent use of mental and relational processes to stress the college's goals of development, empowerment, and future growth, fostering a more inclusive, interactive, and affective tone through the use of active voice, human participants, and personal pronouns (e.g., "we," "you"). The study concludes with limitations and suggestions for future research about gendered discourse.*

**KEYWORDS:** Transitivity Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, Gender, Academic Discourse, Linguistic Choices, Dean's Message, Saudi Higher Education.

## INTRODUCTION

Language plays a vital role in communication. Through the use of words, phrases, and grammar, humans can convey complex ideas, feelings, and information to others in a structured manner (Rachmayani et al., 2024; Salsabila et al., 2024). Additionally, language is a powerful tool that is used to affect people's perceptions and decisions (Alhumsi & Alsaedi, 2023). One of the main aspects that affects language use is gender (Hassan et al., 2021; Salsabila et al., 2024). Gender and sex are terms that are often used interchangeably. However, they are distinct; a person is biologically assigned a sex of male or female at birth, while gender is constructed socially and culturally (Abrar et al., 2024; Anjarwati et al., 2021).

In contemporary linguistics research, gender has become an important topic for exploring how it affects the linguistic choices made by speakers and writers (Hadiyati et al. 2018; Rachmayani et al., 2024). Men and women "draw upon gendered linguistic strategies to perform pragmatic and interactional functions of language and, thus, constitute roles in a gendered way" (as cited in Hadiyati et al. 2018, p. 116). Research proved that these gender differences in language can be revealed by using critical discourse analysis (CDA) informed by Halliday's theory of transitivity system (Abrar et al., 2024; Alhumsi, 2024; Anwar et al., 2024; Alsaedi, 2024; Fatinova et al., 2024; Hassan et al., 2021; Rachmayani et al., 2024; Salsabila et al., 2023). According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), Language is used to convey meaning, and meaning is constructed not only through world choice but also through making systematic grammatical choices. Briefly, Halliday's transitivity analysis is a method for studying how actions and events (processes) are represented in language. Also, the analysis depicts the participants (who or what is involved) and the circumstances (where, when, or how) surrounding these processes. It is used to examine the choices a speaker or writer makes in selecting different process types, participants, and circumstances to deliver a specific meaning (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

A review of the current literature on gender and transitivity analysis in academic written discourse within higher education reveals a significant gap, which this study aims to explore. According to Alhumsi (2024), despite the existence of sufficient studies on gender equality and interactions in the workplace, "very little is known about the language and gender familiarity among professors at higher educational institutions. Specifically, little research has compared the discourse patterns of male and

female professors in academic written discourse." (p. 42). Earlier studies on gender issues in higher education have primarily focused on exploring disparities related to faculty promotion, tenure, salaries, and administrative roles. Other studies have examined student enrollment and recruitment (Alhumsi, 2024). In addition, some researchers have explored gender representation in textbooks (Emilia et al., 2017; Salsabila et al., 2023) and gender in students' writing (Anjarwati et al., 2021; Hadiyati, 2018; Rachmayani et al., 2024). Very little research has been conducted to thoroughly examine gender differences in language use between male and female professors (Alhumsi, 2024). Moreover, Anjarwati et al. (2021) emphasized that there is a lack of research that fully examines gender differences in academic writing through transitivity analysis.

Therefore, this research addresses the gap in the literature by analyzing two messages written by two deans, one male and one female, at a Saudi university. Although one study (Alhumsi, 2024) used transitivity analysis to explore gender differences in dean's messages, it was conducted in a Pakistani context. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study to examine deans' use of language through transitivity analysis in a Saudi university setting. The research questions that guide this research are:

- What transitivity process types are employed in the deans' messages?
- Does gender significantly impact the use of these process types?

The findings of this study may offer valuable insights into understanding the written work of male and female authors in academic discourse through the lens of transitivity analysis (Anjarwati et al., 2021). In addition, employing CDA informed by Halliday's theory of transitivity system enables educators to understand the power of linguistic choices in academic written discourse. This is especially important for dean's messages that are published on university websites and can influence students' decisions about which programs to enroll in (Alhumsi, 2024).

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.1. *Critical Discourse Analysis and The Transitivity System*

Discourse refers to "language beyond the sentence" (Yule, 2014, p. 140). As noted by Hassan et al. (2021), discourse analysis (DA) explores how language is used by people in both written and spoken forms within a specific context. On the other

hand, critical discourse analysis (CDA) employs a more in-depth analytical approach, examining discourse through a critical lens. It takes a further step to reveal how and why a particular discourse is produced (Van Dijk, 1993). Van Dijk (1993) stressed that CDA aims to uncover how social power, dominance, and inequality are reproduced and maintained in text.

One of the key theoretical approaches of CDA is based on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Alsaedi, 2024; Hassan et al., 2021). This SFL theory introduced systematic functional grammar (SFG), in which grammar is considered a tool for constructing meaning that reveals cultural contexts, ideologies, and power relations (Alsaedi, 2024). Hassan et al. (2021) pointed out that, in contrast to the traditional view of grammar as a set of rules, SFG suggests that language users make grammatical choices to convey specific communicative messages. According to Halliday (as cited in Fatinova et al., 2024), "a critical discourse analysis that does not rely on grammar is not a valid analysis, but rather a mere subjective commentary on a text" (p. 1864). Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) argued that meaning is realized at the clause level through ideational, interpersonal, and textual meta-functions. While the ideational meta-function considers language as a representation of human experience of the real world, the interpersonal meta-function focuses on interpersonal interactions and considers language as a social activity. The textual meta-function emphasizes how parts of the text can achieve coherence and cohesion, reflecting the communicative aim of the speaker or writer (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

The transitivity system is part of the ideational meta-function that investigates how human experiences are expressed by language (Halliday & Webster, 2014). The transitivity system analyzes the processes, participants, and circumstantial elements within a clause. A process is represented by a verb, a participant is identified by a noun, and a circumstance is realized through a prepositional or adverbial phrase (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2014;

Halliday & Webster, 2014). Before discussing the transitivity processes and participants, it is worth mentioning that circumstances are elements in the clause that provide further details answering questions such as "where," "when," "how," and "why" the action takes place.

Transitivity has three main process types (material, mental, and relational) and three minor processes (behavioral, verbal, and existential). Material process is a process of doing or happening and involves two participants: the actor (doer) and the goal (the entity that receives the action). The mental process refers to sensing and recognition, including thinking, understanding, feelings, etc. This process involves two participants: the sensor and the phenomenon (the entity being sensed). The relational process, which refers to states of being or having, can be further divided into two moods: attributive and identifying. In the attributive process, one participant, the carrier, is described by a quality or characteristic, known as the attribute. In the identifying process, an entity is identified by comparing it to another entity, with the two participants being the identifier and the identified. When the relational process describes possession, the participants are identified as the possessor and the possessed. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Halliday & Webster, 2014).

For the minor types, the behavioral process is related to physiological or psychological actions such as behaving, coughing, and sleeping, and it involves a single participant: the behavior. The verbal process is associated with the act of "saying" and includes three participants: the sayer (the speaker), the receiver (the addressee), and the verbiage (content of the message). Lastly, the existential process is associated with the occurrence or existence of an entity, often expressed by the "there be" clause, and has only one participant: the existent (the entity that exists) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Halliday & Webster, 2014). Table 1 presents the six types of transitivity processes, participant roles, and examples.

*Table 1: Process Types and Participant Roles.*

Process Type		Participant Roles		Example	Process Analysis
<b>Material</b>	(Doing, Happening)	Actor	Goal	He kicked the ball.	He (actor) Kicked (material process) The ball (the goal)
<b>Mental</b>	(Sensing, Knowing, Feeling)	Sensor	Phenomenon	He saw the girl.	He (sensor) Saw (mental)

					process) The girl (Phenomenon)
<b>Verbal</b>	(Saying)	Sayer	Verbiage	He said hello.	He (sayer) Said (verbal process) Hello (the verbiage)
<b>Behavioral</b>	(Behaving, Coughing, Sleeping)	Behaver		He was sleeping.	He (behavior) Was sleeping (behavioral process)
<b>Existential</b>	(Existing)	Existent		There is a pen on the desk.	Is (existential process) A pen (Existent) On the desk (circumstance)
<b>Relational</b>	(Being, Having)	Carrier	Attribute	She is beautiful.	She (carrier) Is (relational attributive process) Beautiful (attribute)
		Identified	Identifier	He is the tallest.	He (identified) Is (relational identifying process) The tallest (identifier)
		Possessor	Possessed	He has a phone.	He (possessor) Has (relational possessive process) A phone (possessed)

## 1.2. Related Studies on The Transitivity System and Gender

Gender is defined by Emilia et al. (2017) as “socially determined ideas and practices of what it is to be female or male.... It is not an ontological state of being that one simply ‘is’, but rather a process of one’s ‘becoming’ produced in and through social interaction” (p. 207). One of the central topics that has attracted researchers in linguistics is gender and its impact on language use (Hadiyati et al., 2018; Rachmayani et al., 2024). Several research studies have examined gender variation by employing transitivity analysis in different discourse types, including political (Al- Badawi & Al Najjar, 2021; Alhumsi & Alsaedi, 2023; Fatinova et al., 2024; Hassan et al., 2021; Sriwimon & Zilli, 2017; Zhang, 2017), literary (Abrar et al., 2024; Anwar et al., 2024; Khalid et al., 2021; Orji, 2019), advertising (Alsaedi, 2024; Agung, 2025), and academic discourse (Alhumsi, 2024; Anjarwati et al., 2021; Emilia et al., 2017; Hadiyati, 2018; Ignatieva et al., 2021; Rachmayani et al., 2024; Salsabila et al., 2023).

In political discourse, Alhumsi & Alsaedi (2023)

examined gender variation through transitivity analysis in two political articles written by male and female columnists. The researcher utilized qualitative and quantitative approaches to identify transitivity process types and gender variations in the two articles. The findings showed that the most frequent process used by the two writers is the material process. In addition, the study revealed that there was no significant difference in gender variation related to the process types’ frequencies. Fatinova et al. (2024) is another study in political discourse that investigated how Arab news media represent Saudi Arabia’s reforms regarding women’s rights. By using critical discourse analysis and transitivity analysis, the researchers found that the Saudi policy changes related to women were perceived positively. Additionally, the study reported that the news reflected the journalists’ feminist ideology.

Zhang (2017) employed transitivity analysis to examine Donald Trump’s first television debate with Hillary Clinton. The researcher explored the use and the function of the transitivity process types that

occurred in the debate. The findings indicated that material, relational and mental processes were the processes that dominated the speech of both candidates. These processes were used to influence the audience's attitudes. However, Trump employed more existential processes than Hillary Clinton. Similarly, Hassan et al. (2021) analyzed selected political speeches by Hillary Clinton, Michael Obama, Halimah Yaccoub, Donald Trump, and others through the use of critical discourse analysis and transitivity system. The researchers argued that there is a difference between male and female political speeches. Female politicians used a higher percentage of the material processes while males used a higher percentage of mental and verbal processes. Moreover, the study showed that the theme of the speech has a great impact on the verbal choices by the two genders.

In literary discourse, several studies investigated the portrayal of characters in literary texts from a transitivity perspective. For example, Khalid et al. (2021) critically analyzed the Eastern and Western female ideologies constructed in Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*. The transitivity analysis of the text revealed the power relation between male and female characters. "The female character was on oppressed, subordinate and subdued side. The male character, on the other hand, was dominant and authoritative" (pp.17-18). The results highlighted the absence of mental processes in the male character's words, while the female character extensively used mental processes to express her emotions and thoughts. Likewise, Orji (2019) examined transitivity patterns and gender representation in Ola Rotimi's play *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. The researcher also found that the male character used more material processes and the female characters employed more mental processes. The researcher discussed that the roles of these characters are portrayed to show that males have the authority, while females seek social acceptance, humility, and politeness.

Furthermore, Anwar et al. (2024) analyzed the language use in Tariq Ali's novel *The Stone Woman* through Halliday's transitivity system. Their mixed-methods study highlighted reversed gender roles, as the author challenged the traditional gender norms. The results indicated that the female character was described using more material, mental, behavioral, and verbal processes compared to the male character. Additionally, participants' roles with authority and power were assigned to the female character. On the other hand, Abrar et al. (2024) conducted a mixed-method study using the transitivity system to

examine gender representation in Alice Munro's short story *Boys and Girls*. Unlike Anwar et al. (2024), whose study presented reversed gender roles, Abrar's study showed that the author reinforced traditional gender roles by portraying male characters as strong and authoritative, while female characters were represented as delicate, submissive, and dependent.

In the context of advertising discourse, Alsaedi's (2024) mixed-methods study explored transitivity process types employed in car advertisements targeting Saudi women following the lifting of the driving ban on women in Saudi Arabia. The findings revealed that the material process was the most dominant process depicted in the advertisements, followed by the existential and relational processes. Alsaedi (2024) argued that these processes were primarily used to empower Saudi women.

Regarding academic discourse, some scholars examined gender representation in textbooks within the framework of transitivity analysis. For instance, Emilia et al. (2017) analyzed English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks used in the Indonesian context. The researchers noted that the transitivity processes depicted in the textbook portrayed males as independent, brave, and capable, whereas females were described as dependent, passive, and caregivers. Similarly, Salsabila et al. (2023) explored gender representation in two English textbooks. The researchers found that in the first book, males were represented as characters engaged in business, characterized by high aspirations, rationality, and a love for travel. In contrast, females were depicted as characters involved in education and household roles. The second book portrayed males as strong and attentive, while females were described as nurturing and beautiful.

Many scholars have examined gender within academic discourse by focusing on students' written work through the transitivity system. Hadiyati et al. (2018), for instance, analyzed students' final drafts of critical responses to literature. The findings revealed that the most frequently employed process in the texts was the material process. However, male students tended to use the material process more than female students. In addition, Rachmayani et al. (2024) explored transitivity processes in students' opinion essays. The study showed that the material process was the most frequently used process by the students, followed by relational attributive, mental, and existential processes. On the other hand, there was a lack of behavioral and verbal processes in the texts. Additionally, the researchers noted that female students produced more writing than male students.

Another study to be mentioned within academic discourse is the study conducted by Anjarwati et al. (2021). This case study focused on analyzing how female and male writers utilized their meaning-making choices in ten research articles written by five female and five male writers. The findings indicated that both male and female writers used material processes to describe experiences of doing or happening. Additionally, when citing or synthesizing sources, male writers relied on verbal processes more frequently than their female counterparts. Moreover, male writers used more mental processes than female writers.

The last study to cite in this academic context is Alhumsy (2024), which examined gender variations at the university level by analyzing two messages written by two male and female deans. Similar to the findings of Anjarwati et al. (2021), Alhumsy (2024) found that the material process was the most commonly utilized process in both messages. In addition, the study revealed that there was no significant impact of gender on the use of transitivity process types utilized by the two deans. Alhumsy's (2024) study is directly related to this paper's research. However, while Alhumsy's (2024) study was conducted in a Pakistani context, this study is situated within a Saudi context. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, there is a lack of research utilizing transitivity analysis to examine gender at the university level, particularly in the realm of academic written communication among professors and deans. This study aims to address this gap.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine gender variation in academic written discourse within Saudi higher education. The quantitative approach was used to depict general patterns and gather statistical data about the frequency of transitivity process types in the texts. According to Hassan et al. (2021), the quantitative approach is a time-saving tool that provides statistical information and facilitates qualitative analysis. On the other hand, the qualitative approach was used to critically examine the implicit meanings and intentional use of transitivity processes in the texts (Alhumsy et al., 2021). According to Bloomberg and Vope (2016) and Merriam (2009), qualitative research is valuable for exploring the complexity of data and providing rich descriptions of social phenomena in real-life

contexts.

The data were collected from two messages written by deans at a Saudi university, both are available on the university's official website. The first message is authored by a male dean of the College of Architecture and Planning, while the second message is authored by a female dean of the College of Science and Humanities at the same university. To have a reliable and valid comparison between the texts, both texts were selected based on their similarity in length, content, and context. The two messages highlight the objectives of their colleges and the high-quality programs they offer. In addition, the researcher obtained permission from both deans to use their messages for analysis in this research study.

Research has proven that the impact of gender on language use can be explored through CDA informed by Halliday's theory of transitivity system (Hassan et al., 2021). Therefore, for data analysis, the two texts were divided into sentences and then into clauses. Each clause was analyzed according to Halliday's transitivity system by identifying the process type, participants, and circumstances, as illustrated in Table 1. The researcher focused on the process types represented by the verbs in the clauses produced by the two deans. According to Renkema (2004), verbs are important components of a clause, as they convey the semantic part of the clause and include the roles of the participants in a given discourse. The overall number of process types and the frequency of each type in each text were calculated using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) (version 26). In particular, an Independent Sample T-Test was used to investigate whether gender has a significant impact on the use of process types in the two texts. Furthermore, the researcher utilized CDA as a qualitative tool to critically and thoroughly analyze gender variations and intentional uses of the process types in the two texts.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. Text 1: Male Dean's Message

A total of 11 sentences are found in the male message. These sentences included 24 clauses. Table 2 shows transitivity process types and the frequency of each type. Out of the six transitivity processes, only four processes were used by the male dean, namely: material, relational, mental, and existential processes (Table 2).

*Table 2: Distribution Of Process Types in Male Dean's Message.*

Process type	Frequency	Percentage
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<b>Material</b>	17	70.8 %
<b>Relational</b>	4	16.7%
<b>Mental</b>	2	8.3%
<b>Existential</b>	1	4.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100 %</b>

As shown in Table 2, the material process was the most frequently used, accounting for 70.8% of the total. In contrast, the existential process had the lowest percentage, representing only 4.2%. The relational process accounted for 16.7%, and was expressed through four verbs: “has”, “am”,

“includes”, and “is”. On the other hand, the mental process represented 8.3%, and was expressed by only two verbs: “hoped” and “appreciates”. Notably, the male dean did not use any verbal or behavioral processes. All the process types used in the male message are illustrated in Table 3.

**Table 3: Transitivity Analysis of Process Types in The Male Dean’s Message.**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>	<b>Clause</b>
Actor (implicit)	Material (was established)	Goal (the college)	in 1975	The College was established in 1975
Actor (implied: The College)	Material (offering)	Goal (bachelor degrees)	in the different fields of architecture and planning	offering bachelor degrees in the different fields of architecture and planning
Actor (implied: the programs)	Material (have provided)	Goal (architects, engineers and planners)	professionally	that have provided professionally qualified architects, engineers and planners
Actor (implied: architects, engineers and planners)	Material (have contributed)	Goal (the development)	of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	who have significantly contributed to the development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Actor (implied: I)	Material (to present)	Goal (a short introduction)	about the College of Architecture and Planning	to present a short introduction about the College of Architecture and Planning
Actor (This introduction)	Material (presents)	Goal (a summary)	of the mission, the vision and the objectives of the College and its departments	This introduction presents a summary of the mission, the vision and the objectives of the College and its departments.
Actor (implicit)	Material (offered)	Goal (implied: the programs)	at the College along with short CV’s of the faculty members in each academic department	offered at the College, along with short CV’s of the faculty members in each academic department.
Actor (the College)	Material (has established)	Goal (a consultancy center)	recently	Recently, the College has established a consultancy center
Actor (implied: the consultancy center)	Material (organizes)	Goal (a number of short training courses)		that organizes a number of short training courses
Actor (implied: the consultancy center)	Material (offers)	Goal (professional services) Beneficiary (both the public and private sectors)		and offers professional services to both the public and private sectors
Actor (implied: the center)	Material (take)	Goal (a leading role)		to take a leading role
Actor (implied: the center)	Material (directing)	Goal (the community)	towards a more sustainable built environment	in directing the community towards a more sustainable built environment
Actor (the center)	Material (will extend)	Goal (its role)		that the center will extend its role
Actor (implied: the center)	Material (bringing about)	Goal (the concept of smart buildings)	into reality	by bringing about the concept of smart

				buildings into reality
Actor (implied: the center)	Material (seeking)	Goal (a formal collaboration)	with reputed international institutions	by seeking a formal collaboration with reputed international institutions
Actor (implicit)	Material (could not be accomplished)	Goal (These achievements)	without the input and cooperation of all members of the College and the coordination of their efforts as one team	These achievements could not be accomplished without the input and cooperation of all members of the College and the coordination of their efforts as one team.
Actor (implied: the University's President)	Material (supplying)	Goal (all our needs and requirements)		in supplying all our needs and requirements
Possessor (each department)	Relational-possessive (has)	Possessed (undergraduate and graduate programs)		Each department has undergraduate and graduate programs
Carrier (I)	Relational (am)	Attribute (pleased)	with great honor	With great honor I am pleased
Possessor (it)	Relational-possessive (includes)	Possessed (an overview)	of both undergraduate and graduate academic programs	It also includes an overview of both undergraduate and graduate academic programs
Carrier (The main aim of this center)	Relational (is)	Attribute (to take a leading role)		The main aim of this center is to take a leading role
Senser (implicit)	Mental (is hoped)	Phenomenon (that the center will extend its role)		it is hoped that the center will extend its role
Senser (The College administration)	Mental (appreciates)	Phenomenon (the limitless support)	of the University's President	The College administration appreciates the limitless support of the University's President
(There)	Existential (are)	Existent (five departments)	Architecture, Building Science and Technology, Landscape Architecture, Urban and Regional Planning and Interior Architecture	There are five departments: Architecture, Building Science and Technology, Landscape Architecture, Urban and Regional Planning and Interior Architecture.

### 3.2. Text 2: Female Dean's Message

The female message consisted of ten sentences and a total of 37 clauses. Table 4 presents the process

types utilized by the female dean. It is apparent from this table that the female dean employed only three processes, including material, mental, and relational processes.

**Table 4: Distribution Of Process Types in Female Dean's Message.**

Process type	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Material</b>	22	59.5 %
<b>Relational</b>	9	24.3 %
<b>Mental</b>	6	16.2 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100 %</b>

The material process was used the most at 59.5%. On the other hand, the mental process was the least used at 16.2%, and represented by six verbs: "want", "believe", "value", "aspire", "believe", and "hope". Meanwhile, the relational process made up 24.3%,

and was expressed through three forms of the verb "be", namely: "is", "are", and "be". Similarly, Table 5 shows all the process types employed by the female dean.

**Table 5: Transitivity Analysis of Process Types in The Female Dean's Message.**

Participant	Process	Participant	Circumstance	Clause
Actor (implied: The College of Sciences and Humanities)	Material (to participate)	Goal (the advancement of the educational process)	actively as a basic duty and responsibility	to actively participate in the advancement of the educational process as a basic duty and responsibility
Actor (implied: we)	Material (contribute)	Goal (supporting the sustainable development)	of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	to contribute to supporting the sustainable development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Actor (we/ the college)	Material (welcome)	Goal (those)		We, the college, welcome those
Actor (implied: who)	Material (make)	Goal (a difference)	in our changing world	who wants to make a difference in our changing world
Actor (we)	Material (seek)	Goal (to shape the minds of the next generation)		We seek to shape the minds of the next generation
Actor (implied: we)	Material (to shape)	Goal (the minds)	of the next generation	
Actor (implied: we)	Material (build)	Goal (their personalities)		and build their personalities
Actor (implied: we)	Material (to contribute)	Goal (to building a conscious and promising generation)		to contribute to building a conscious and promising generation
Actor (implied: we)	Material (building)	Goal (a conscious and promising generation)		
Actor (the college)	Material (has taken)	Goal (steady and rapid steps)	during the past years	During the past years, the college has taken steady and rapid steps
Actor (implied: the college)	Material (seeking)	Goal (the highest quality of education)		seeking the highest quality of education
Actor (implied: the college)	Material (implied: seeking)	Goal (the partnership)	with the society	the partnership with the society as a value
Actor (implied: the college)	Material (building)	Goal (sustainable [development])		and building sustainable
Actor (All departments)	Material (are working)		constantly	All departments are constantly working
Actor (implied: the departments)	Material (to develop)	Goal (quality programs)		to develop quality programs
Actor (implied: quality programs)	Material (meet)	Goal (the aspirations)	of the Kingdom's Vision of 2030	that meet the aspirations of the Kingdom's Vision of 2030
Actor (implied: quality programs)	Material (meet)	Goal (the requirements and needs)	of the labor market	and to meet the requirements and needs of the labor market
Actor (we)	Material (strive)		very hard	We strive very hard
Actor (implied: we)	Material (to arm)	Goal (you)	with the skills	to arm you with skills
Actor (you)	Material (will find)	Goal (what you seek)	in our college	that you will find what you seek
Actor (you)	Material (seek)			
Actor (Allah)	Material (bless)	Goal (you)		May Allah bless you
senser (who)	Mental (want)	phenomenon (to make a difference)		who wants to make a difference
Senser (we)	Mental (believe)	Phenomenon (the teaching profession is the greatest profession)		We believe that the teaching profession is the greatest profession of all
Senser (we)	Mental (value)	Phenomenon (implied: the highest quality of education)	highly	which we highly value
Senser (we)	Mental (aspire)			that we aspire to

Senser (we)	Mental (believe)	Phenomenon ([the skills] are the key to your success)		that we believe are the key to your success
Senser (we)	Mental (hope)	Phenomenon (that you will find what you seek)		We hope that you will find what you seek
Carrier (The College of Sciences and Humanities)	Relational (is)	Attribute (keen)	in Jubail	The College of Sciences and Humanities in Jubail is keen
Carrier (we)	Relational (are)	Attribute (committed)		to which we are committed.
Carrier (this)	Relational (is)	Attribute (with the aim)		This is with the aim
Carrier (the teaching profession)	Relational (is)	Attribute (the greatest profession of all)		We believe that the teaching profession is the greatest profession of all
Carrier (implied: generation)	Relational (implied: is)	Attribute (capable)	of change for the better	capable of change for the better,
Carrier (implied: generation)	Relational (implied: is)	Attribute (established)	firmly in principles and values	and firmly established in principles and values
Carrier (a value)	Relational (cannot be)	Attribute (compromised)		that cannot be compromised
Carrier (implied: skills)	Relational (are)	Attribute (the key to your success)		that we believe are the key to your success
Carrier (implied: skills)	Relational (implied: are)	Attribute (lifelong learning, teamwork, leadership, effective communication, critical thinking, respect for other opinions, and social responsibility)		such as lifelong learning, teamwork, leadership, effective communication, critical thinking, respect for other opinions, and social responsibility.

### 3.3. Gender Impact on Transitivity Process Types Used by The Two Deans

Table 6 shows the overall frequencies of different transitivity process types utilized by each dean. It can be seen from the table that the male dean used more transitivity processes than the female dean. In

addition, the female dean made greater use of relational and mental processes compared to the male dean. While the male dean used only one existential process, the female dean did not use any. Finally, neither dean utilized verbal or behavioral processes.

**Table 6: The Overall Frequencies of Transitivity Process Types in Both Messages.**

Process Type	Male	Female
<b>Materia</b>	70.8%	59.5%
<b>Relational</b>	16.7%	24.3%
<b>Mental</b>	8.3%	16.2%
<b>Existential</b>	4.2%	----
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

To quantitatively evaluate the impact of gender on the transitivity process types used by the two deans, an Independent Sample *t*-test was utilized. Although this type of statistical test is more commonly used with larger samples, it was applied here to gain insight into potential patterns within the

limited set of process types identified ( $n = 3$  for the female dean;  $n = 4$  for the male dean). Table 7 shows that there is no significant impact of gender on the prevalence of transitivity process types ( $t = 1.05$ ,  $p = 0.34$ ).

**Table 7: Independent Sample T-Test Results for Frequencies of Process Types.**

Process Type	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Process types produced by female dean's message	3	12.33	8.50	1.05	0.34
Process types produced by male dean's message	4	6.00	7.43		

#### 4. DISCUSSION

This study utilized CDA informed by Halliday's theory of transitivity system to examine gender variation in academic written discourse produced by two Saudi deans, one male and one female. To answer the first research question, "What transitivity process types are employed in the deans' messages?", the results revealed that four process types occurred in the two messages: material, mental, relational, and existential. The male dean used all four process types, while the female dean employed only three: material, relational, and mental. This finding is in agreement with Alhumsī's (2024) study, where the female dean used material, mental, and relational processes. However, the male dean in Alhumsī's (2024) study used only material and relational processes.

The material process was the most frequently used process by both deans in this study, with the male dean using it 70.8% of the cases and the female dean 59.5%. Notably, the male dean made greater use of material processes than the female dean. This pattern aligns with Hadiyati et al. (2018), who argued that male participants tended to use more material processes than their female counterparts. In general, through the dominant use of the material process, the two deans in this study were able to effectively communicate the goals, services, and achievements of their respective colleges. This finding echoes Alhumsī's (2024) study, where the material process was also the most commonly used process by both male and female deans in Pakistan to communicate actions and events related to their university. The dominance of the material process, compared to other process types, was further supported by several research studies such as Alhumsī & Alsaedi (2023), Anjarwati et al. (2021), Hadiyati et al. (2018), and Rachmayani et al. (2024). Furthermore, the relational process ranked second in frequency in both messages analyzed in this study, followed by the mental process. The existential process was used only once by the male dean when he listed the departments in his college, stating, "There are five departments...".

To address the second question, "Does gender significantly impact the use of these process types?", both the quantitative and qualitative analyses of data showed different results. First, the quantitative analysis revealed no significant gender difference in the use of the process types by the two deans ( $t=1.05$ ,  $p=0.34$ ). This finding is consistent with Alhumsī & Alsaedi (2023) and Alhumsī (2024), who also found no significant effect of gender on the transitivity processes utilized by male and female writers. It is noteworthy that the use of an independent sample t-

test to assess gender variations in transitivity research has not been extensively employed in prior research studies (Alhumsī & Alsaedi, 2023).

In contrast, the qualitative analysis uncovered significant differences in how the two deans employed transitivity processes, differences that were not captured by the statistical analysis. For example, while both deans used material processes, the male dean used material processes to stress the college's identity by highlighting its services and achievements (e.g., "the college was established," "offers professional services," "takes a leading role"). On the other hand, the female dean employed material processes to stress the college's goals related to future development, empowerment, and growth (e.g., "participate in the advancement," "make a difference," "seek to shape the minds," "build their personalities," "meet the aspirations of the kingdom's Vision 2030").

Moreover, the male dean used mental and relational processes minimally, mostly to describe the college structure and programs (e.g., "each department has undergraduate and graduate programs," "the main aim of the center is"). On the other hand, the female dean employed more mental and relational processes, employing mental processes to emotionally engage the reader by expressing shared values, hopes, and aspirations (e.g., "we believe," "we highly value," "we aspire to," "we hope that"), and relational processes to describe the college's commitments to empower the new generation (e.g., "we are committed," "skills are the key to your success," "generation is capable of change," "a value cannot be compromised"). As a result, the male dean's message is more college-oriented, focusing on the structure, services, achievements, and authority of the college, while the female dean's message is more oriented toward shared human values, development, empowerment, and nurturing.

Another notable difference was the use of passive voice by the male dean (e.g., was established, could not be accomplished) and the use of abstract third-person participants (e.g., "the college," "each department," "the center," "these achievements") to maintain objectivity and distance from the reader. In contrast, the female dean employed a more active voice and used human participants (e.g., "we," "you," "generation") to create a more engaging and personal tone. Her message also featured numerous personal pronouns (e.g., "we," "you," "our," "your") to reduce the distance and make the discourse more interactive, inclusive, and affective. These differences have been highlighted in previous studies on

language and gender. For example, Hassan et al. (2021) mentioned that females' speech tends to be inconclusive and cooperative, while males' speech is often recognized as objective and authoritative. Additionally, Hassan et al. (2021) pointed out that females tend to use more mental processes to engage the audience emotionally.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study utilized CDA guided by Halliday's theory of transitivity system to examine the linguistic choices and gender vibration in academic written discourse within the Saudi context. The researcher utilized qualitative and quantitative analysis to examine two messages written by Saudi deans, one male and one female. The findings indicated that despite the fact that both texts selected for analysis are academic in nature, as they are messages from the deans posted on their respective university website and written in standard language, there are distinct variations influenced by gender disparities.

In terms of the transitivity process types, the findings showed that four processes occurred in the two texts, namely: material, mental, relational, and existential. The male dean used all four processes, while the female dean used only three: material, relational, and mental. The material process was the most dominantly used process by both deans. The relational process was the second most frequent in both messages, followed by the mental process, and the existential process appeared only once by the male dean.

The quantitative analysis, on the surface, showed no significant impact of gender on the use of transitivity process types ( $t=1.05$ ,  $p=0.34$ ). However, the qualitative analysis, which critically examined the texts on a deeper level, revealed notable differences. These differences in findings indicate the significance of combining the two approaches to get a more comprehensive understanding of the data.

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Through the dominant use of material processes with limited use of relational and mental processes, the male dean focused more on presenting the college's identity, services, and achievements. He utilized more passive voice and used more abstract and third-person participants to maintain objectivity and distance from the reader. On the other hand, in addition to the dominant use of material processes, the female dean utilized more mental and relational processes compared to the male dean to highlight the college's goals of development, empowerment, and future growth. She employed more active voice, human participants, and used pronouns such as "we" and "you" to make her message more inclusive, interactive, caring, and emotionally engaging.

This study has some limitations. First, this study analyzed only two texts written by two deans. Future research could benefit from examining a larger sample that includes not only deans but also the speeches of professors and the words of university presidents (Alhumsi, 2024). Another limitation is that while this study briefly touched on the use of participants, its main focus was on examining the process types. Therefore, a more comprehensive analysis of the three components of transitivity (process types, participant roles, and circumstances) can be addressed by future researchers. In addition, when examining the gender impact on language use, future research can also take into consideration other factors such as age, educational background, and field of expertise (Rachmayani et al., 2024).

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study can offer valuable insights into the linguistic choices made by male and female authors in academic discourse (Anjarwati et al., 2021). Understanding these differences is important for educators, particularly when writing texts like a dean's message or a department chair's message that may be published on university websites and may influence students' decisions to enroll in a specific college or department (Alhumsi, 2024).

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