
**Constructing The Lyrical Persona:
A Transitivity Analysis of Raye's "Where Is My Husband!"**

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Abstract

As a form of discourse, song lyrics linguistically represent experiences, emotions, and identities. While previous studies have applied *Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)* to analyze transitivity in song lyrics, few have examined how transitivity contributes to constructing the lyrical persona's identity. This study examines how transitivity constructs the identity of the lyrical persona in Raye's "Where Is My Husband!" using a qualitative descriptive approach. All clauses in the official lyrics were analyzed using Halliday and Matthiessen's transitivity framework and interpreted through Bucholtz and Hall's discourse-based theory of identity construction and the lyrical persona concept by Culler. The analysis identified 130 processes, with material processes occurring the most frequently, followed by mental, verbal, relational, and behavioral processes. However, the existential processes were absent in the findings. These suggest that the transitivity configurations construct the lyrical persona collectively as an individual characterized by active longing, emotional expectation, communicative persistence, and relational incompleteness. The study shows that transitivity analysis can explain how experiential meanings contribute to identity construction in contemporary song lyrics.

Keywords: *Systemic Functional Linguistics; transitivity; identity construction; lyrical persona; song lyrics.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is central for developing how people understand, represent, and communicate their experiences. Apart from serving as a medium for exchanging information, it allows individuals to organize events, express perceptions, negotiate relationships, and position themselves within particular social and cultural settings. Such a perspective reflects the view that language is a social semiotic resource through which meanings are constructed rather than merely transmitted (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Within *Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)*, this meaning-making function is realized through three metafunctions, one of which is the experiential metafunction that explains how human experience is represented in language. The implementation of the experiential metafunction through the transitivity system, which interprets experience by dividing clauses into processes, participants, and circumstances (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Since these grammatical choices show not only what is represented, but also how speakers or textual voices define themselves, others, and the surrounding world, transitivity provides an organized framework for exploring the relationship between representations of experience and the construction of identity in discourse. This perspective builds the conceptual framework for investigating identity not as a fixed personal attribute but as a meaning-making process through language.

As one of the most expressive forms of discourse, song lyrics provide a rich verbal space in which experiences, emotions, beliefs, and social values are represented and negotiated. Rather than serving solely as artistic or aesthetic expressions, lyrics construct

meanings that reflect the interaction between people and their social worlds, which makes them an important object of linguistic inquiry. Recent scholarship has increasingly recognized that song lyrics function as sites where identities are negotiated through numerous linguistic and semiotic resources. Some studies prove that identity in popular music is illustrated through multilingual practices, cultural symbols, discourse strategies, and representations of social experience, showing that lyrics can communicate far more than personal emotions or entertainment value (Picone, 2024; Kabkole et al., 2025; Siregar et al., 2025). Therefore, the linguistic analysis of song lyrics delivers valuable insights into how textual voices construct particular perspectives, social positions, and identities in specific cultural settings. This increasing recognition has stimulated researchers to apply a range of linguistic frameworks to explore song lyrics, among which Systemic Functional Linguistics, particularly transitivity analysis, has become one of the most widely adopted approaches for examining how experience is represented through language.

The increasing use of Systemic Functional Linguistics in analyzing song lyrics has demonstrated how transitivity analysis can effectively show how experiential meanings are created through the way grammar is used. In many different types of music, research has repeatedly found that how people think, connect with others, and deal with material things are key in showing feelings, relationships, actions, memories, and self-thinking (Dewi Max et al., 2023; Hamzah et al., 2026; Manik & Napitupulu, 2026). These studies show that transitivity does more than just recognize grammar rules; it offers a clear way to understand how lyrical experiences are structured and made sense of through language. Recent studies have also connected transitivity patterns to wider topics like agency, emotional experiences, and how people represent themselves, showing that the way grammar is used in song lyrics helps shape identities (Fathimatuzzahra et al., 2025; Hamzah et al., 2026). A comprehensive review of how meaning is expressed through song lyrics shows that transitivity has become a key approach in understanding how language in modern music reflects human experiences (Simbolon et al., 2025). Together, these studies show that transitivity is a strong method for examining how language connects to experiences, and they also highlight the increasing focus on how grammar shapes meanings related to identity in song lyrics.

Song lyrics are not just about sharing experiences; they are also seen as spaces where people express, discuss, and change their identities. Recent research has looked at identity from many different angles, such as multilingual practices, how cultures are shown, critical conversations, breaking down meanings, and the role of gender, showing that identity in song lyrics is formed through the language and symbols used, not just by showing personal traits (Picone, 2024; Kabkole et al., 2025; Siregar et al., 2025; Khurshid & Farid, 2023). Similarly, many studies focused on transitivity have started connecting grammatical structures with feelings, control, how people see themselves, and their sense of identity. These studies suggest that how experiences are expressed helps shape the voice in poetry (Fathimatuzzahra et al., 2025; Hamzah et al., 2026; Manik & Napitupulu, 2026). Among today's popular songs, Raye's "Where Is My Husband!" stands out as a strong example for exploring this relationship, since its lyrics are filled with repeated themes of desire, expectations, self-reflection, and how people connect with each other. These repeated patterns in experience make the song a great choice for looking at how identity is slowly built through the way people choose to connect with each other, rather than just from the themes that are directly presented. So, the song offers a chance to look into identity by looking at how grammar and conversation work together, which goes beyond earlier studies that only focused on personal experiences.

Despite earlier research indicating that transitivity can reveal emotions, control, relationships between people, and various forms of identity in song lyrics, there are still

some areas where inadequate study has been conducted. These include how identity is often seen through fixed categories like female agency, masculinity, or celebrity identity, as opposed to developing naturally from repeated patterns of language. Furthermore, while transitivity is now more closely linked with identity itself today, little attention has gone into how full sets (including individuals) shape the identity of a lyrical persona.

Based on the previous discussion, this study looks at how transitivity shapes the identity of the lyrical speaker in Raye's song "Where Is My Husband!". The goal is to find out how the transitivity structures are shown through the processes, people involved, and situations in the lyrics, look at how these structures show the experiences of the person speaking in the song, and explain how repeated patterns of experience help build the identity of that person. This study aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of how grammar relates to the creation of identity in modern song lyrics by bringing together Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity framework, Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) approach to identity through discourse, and Culler's idea of the lyrical persona. The results are expected to give more value to *Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)* by showing how transitivity can be used not just to explain experiential meaning but also to reveal how identity is built through discourse. The study also contributes to research on song lyrics by offering a clear and well-founded way to separate the lyrical persona from the real artist, which provides a more accurate method for understanding identity in the way lyrics express it.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by Halliday and further developed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), views language as a social semiotic system through which people create and exchange meaning in particular social contexts. Instead of considering language simply as a set of grammatical rules, SFL emphasizes its functional role in representing speakers and writers' experiences, forming interpersonal relationships, and organizing messages consistently. Meaning is, therefore, understood as inseparable from the language users' social purposes and settings. This functional perspective has made SFL one of the most widely applied linguistic approaches in discourse analysis, literary studies, media discourse, and song lyric analysis since it explains what language means and how meaning is recognized through grammatical choices.

Within SFL, language simultaneously performs three metafunctions: the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The ideational metafunction concerns the representation of human reality and logical relationships, the interpersonal metafunction focuses on the enactment of social relationships and attitudes, and the textual metafunction organizes linguistic resources into coherent messages. These metafunctions operate concurrently in every clause, allowing language users to express experiences while simultaneously interacting with others and structuring information. Since the present study analyzes how experience is represented in song lyrics to construct the identity of the lyrical persona, the ideational metafunction, particularly its experiential component, provides the most relevant conceptual basis.

The experiential component of the ideational metafunction is realized through the transitivity system, which explains how language construes experiences by organizing them into processes, participants, and circumstances. Rather than functioning simply as a grammatical classification of verbs, transitivity offers a systematic account of how speakers and writers represent actions, thoughts, emotions, relationships, and states of being. Through these grammatical resources, language constructs particular versions of reality

that reveal how experiences are interpreted and communicated. Hence, transitivity provides an appropriate analytical framework for reviewing how constant experiential patterns in song lyrics contribute to the construction of the lyrical persona's identity.

Transitivity System

The transitivity system constitutes the experiential component of the ideational metafunction in Systemic Functional Linguistics. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) conceptualize transitivity as a semantic system through which language represents human experience by organizing events, thoughts, emotions, relationships, and states of being into grammatical structures. Unlike the traditional grammatical view that associates transitivity with whether a verb requires an object, transitivity in SFL concerns how experience is construed through the interaction of three principal elements: processes, participants, and circumstances. Together, these elements compose the experiential meaning of a clause by specifying what happens, who or what is involved, and under what conditions the experience occurs. Therefore, transitivity enables researchers to investigate not only the grammatical organization of clauses but also the ways in which speakers or writers construct particular representations of reality through language.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) classify experiential processes into six major categories: material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential processes. Material processes represent actions, events, or activities that involve doing or happening, typically realized through participants such as the *Actor* and the *Goal*. Mental processes express inner experiences, including perception, cognition, affection, and desire, involving a conscious participant known as the *Senser* and an entity experienced as the *Phenomenon*. Relational processes establish relationships between entities by identifying, classifying, or attributing qualities, commonly involving participants such as the *Carrier* and *Attribute* or the *Token* and *Value*. Behavioral processes represent physiological or psychological behaviors that occupy an intermediate position between material and mental processes, while verbal processes construe acts of saying or communicating through participants such as the *Sayer*, *Receiver*, and *Verbiage*. Existential processes simply indicate the existence of an entity or phenomenon, generally realized through the process *there is/are* and the participant *Existent*. Each process type contributes a clear perspective on how experience is represented, allowing researchers to recognize repeated patterns in the construction of meaning.

Every process is accompanied by one or more participants that directly take part in the experience represented by the clause. Participant roles vary according to the type of process and therefore cannot be interpreted independently of it. For example, an *Actor* performs an action in a material process, whereas a *Senser* experiences thoughts or emotions in a mental process, and a *Carrier* possesses an attribute in a relational process. Similarly, verbal processes introduce participants such as the *Sayer* and *Receiver*, while existential processes involve the *Existent* as the entity whose existence is asserted. These participant roles specify who experiences, performs, receives, or embodies the meanings represented by each process, thereby delivering a more complete account of experiential representation than process classification alone.

In addition to processes and participants, experiential meanings are further developed through circumstances, which provide supplementary information about the conditions surrounding an experience. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) identify various circumstantial categories, including *Location*, *Extent*, *Manner*, *Cause*, *Contingency*, *Accompaniment*, *Role*, *Matter*, and *Angle*. Circumstances answer questions such as where, when, how, why, with whom, or in what capacity an experience occurs. Although circumstances are optional from a grammatical perspective, they can deepen the

interpretation of experiential meaning through situating actions, emotions, or relationships within particular temporal, spatial, or social contexts.

The present study adopts a thorough view of transitivity by examining the interaction of processes, participants, and circumstances rather than treating these parts as isolated grammatical categories. While previous studies have often stressed the frequency of particular process types, Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) framework asserts that experiential meaning emerges from the complete transitivity configuration realized in each clause. Therefore, this study interprets continual transitivity patterns as linguistic representations of experience through which the identity of the lyrical persona is constructed. This perspective enables transitivity to function not simply as a descriptive grammatical framework but also as an analytical instrument for explaining how language contributes to identity construction in song lyrics.

Identity Construction

Identity has long been recognized as a central concern in linguistic and discourse studies because language not only shows who people are but also intentionally participates in constructing whom they become in different social contexts. Modern viewpoints reject the notion of identity as a fixed, stable attribute that individuals simply possess. Instead, identity is understood as dynamic, relational, and continuously negotiated through social interaction and discourse. This perspective points out that identities emerge from the ways individuals represent themselves and are represented by others through language, making discourse an essential site for examining identity construction.

Among the influential approaches to identity, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) conceptualize identity as an emergent product of social and linguistic practices rather than a pre-existing personal characteristic. They argue that identity is produced through discourse as speakers position themselves and others in particular social, cultural, and interpersonal contexts. For that reason, identity should not be viewed as an inherent quality that exists prior to communication but as a process that is continuously accomplished through linguistic choices made in specific communicative situations. This discourse-based perspective shifts analytical attention from asking "what identity is" to examining "how identity is constructed" through language.

The discourse-oriented view of identity provides an important conceptual basis for *Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)* because both perspectives regard language as a resource for meaning-making rather than merely a system of grammatical rules. Within the experiential metafunction, transitivity represents how speakers or writers construe actions, emotions, relationships, perceptions, and states of being. These representations are not neutral descriptions of reality; rather, they reflect particular perspectives through which textual voices position themselves in relation to the experiences they describe. Repeated patterns of processes, participants, and circumstances therefore contribute to the construction of recognizable identities by repeatedly portraying particular ways of acting, thinking, feeling, and relating to others.

In the context of song lyrics, this relationship between discourse and identity is notably significant because lyrical texts frequently rely on first-person narration to express experiences, desires, emotions, and interpersonal relationships. The identity presented in such lyrics is therefore constructed through linguistic representations rather than simply representing the biography or personal experiences of the songwriter. Thus, the present study adopts Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) discourse-based perspective to interpret the transitivity configurations identified in the lyrics as linguistic resources through which the identity of the lyrical persona is constructed.

Lyrical Persona

The concept of the lyrical persona provides an important distinction in interpreting poetic and lyrical texts. According to Culler (2017), the voice that speaks in a poem or song should not automatically be identified with its empirical author. Rather, lyrical texts construct a textual speaker, or lyrical persona, whose thoughts, emotions, experiences, and perspectives remain realized through language within the text itself. Although the author creates this voice, the persona functions as a discursive entity that exists independently of the author's personal identity or lived experiences. That said, the employment of first-person pronouns such as *I*, *me*, or *my* in the song lyrics should not be interpreted as direct evidence of the songwriter's autobiographical experiences without additional contextual support.

This distinction is particularly relevant to the linguistic studies of song lyrics because the meanings represented through grammatical choices belong primarily to the textual voice constructed within the discourse. From a *Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)* perspective, transitivity patterns represent the experiences of the speaker encoded in the text rather than those of the empirical artist. As a result, the present study centers on the identity of the lyrical persona constructed through the configurations of processes, participants, and circumstances in Raye's "Where Is My Husband?". This approach allows the analysis to stay anchored in linguistic evidence while refraining from assumptions about the songwriter's personal identity or intentions beyond what is represented in the lyrics.

Conceptual Framework

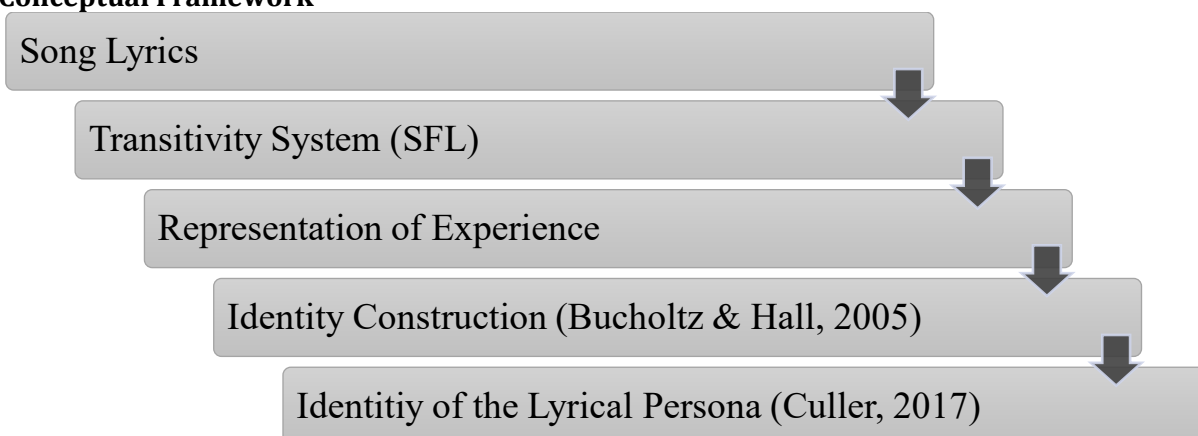


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The present study combines Systemic Functional Linguistics, discourse-based identity theory, and the concept of the lyrical persona into a combined analytical system. Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity system contributes to the linguistic system for identifying how experiences are represented by processes, participants, and circumstances. Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) perspective explains identity as an unfixed attribute but emerges through discourse and social interaction. Complementing these perspectives, Culler's concept of the lyrical persona claims that the identity analyzed in song lyrics belongs to the textual speaker rather than the empirical songwriter. For that reason, this study interprets the transitivity configurations as representations of experience through which the identity of the lyrical persona is discursively constructed. The relationship among theoretical perspectives is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 illustrates the analytical procedure adopted in this study. The analysis begins with the song lyrics as the source of linguistic data. Through the transitivity system, the experiential meanings encoded in processes, participants, and circumstances are identified

and interpreted as representations of experience. These experiential patterns are subsequently analyzed from the perspective of discourse-based identity construction to explain how they contribute to the construction of the lyrical persona's identity. Hence, the study integrates grammatical analysis with discourse theory to provide a systematic explanation of how identity is linguistically constructed in contemporary song lyrics.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to investigate how transitivity constructs the identity of the lyrical persona in Raye's *"Where Is My Husband!"*. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aims to interpret linguistic meanings represented in the song lyrics rather than to examine statistical relationships or test hypotheses. The analysis was grounded in Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics, particularly the transitivity system, and was interpreted through Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) discourse-based perspective on identity construction together with Culler's concept of the lyrical persona.

The population of this study comprised all clauses contained in the official lyrics of Raye's *"Where Is My Husband!"*. Since the song contains a limited number of analyzable clauses, the study employed total sampling, whereby every clause in the lyrics was selected as the research sample. The sample matched the population precisely, enabling the study to thoroughly investigate all transitivity configurations depicted in the song. In Systemic Functional Linguistics, the clause serves as the primary unit of analysis because it realizes experiential meaning through the interaction of processes, participants, and circumstances (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

The data were collected using the documentation method. The official lyrics were obtained from the officially released version of the song available through Raye's official YouTube channel and verified against published lyric sources. Subsequently, the lyrics were segmented into clauses following the principles of clause analysis in Systemic Functional Linguistics. Each clause was then numbered systematically to facilitate coding and analysis. Throughout the data collection process, the lyrics were preserved in their original form to ensure the authenticity of the linguistic data.

The data analysis was conducted in four stages. First, each clause was analyzed using Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity framework to identify the process type, participant roles, and circumstantial elements. Second, the interaction among these transitivity components was interpreted to explain how the lyrics represent the experiences of the lyrical persona. Third, experiential patterns were interpreted using Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) discourse-based perspective to explain how identity is constructed through language. Finally, Culler's concept of the lyrical persona guided the interpretation by distinguishing the textual speaker represented in the lyrics from the empirical artist. The findings from these analytical stages were then synthesized to explain how transitivity contributes to the construction of the lyrical persona's identity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of Transitivity Processes

The transitivity analysis identified 130 process realizations distributed across six process types in the lyrics of Raye's *"Where Is My Husband!"*, namely material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential processes. However, their distribution is not uniform. As presented in Table 1, the lyrics are dominated by material processes (42 occurrences; 32.31%), followed by mental processes (31 occurrences; 23.85%) and verbal processes (30 occurrences; 23.08%). Relational processes occur 24 times in total,

comprising circumstantial (13 occurrences; 10.00%), attributive (9 occurrences; 6.92%), and identifying (2 occurrences; 1.54%) types. Behavioral processes appear only three times (2.31%), while existential processes are absent from the data.

Table 1. Frequency of Process Type

Process Type	Frequency	Percentage
Material	42	32.31%
Mental	31	23.85%
Verbal	30	23.08%
Behavioral	3	2.31%
Existential	0	0%
Relational (attributive)	9	6.92%
Relational (identifying)	2	1.54%
Relational (circumstantial)	13	10.00%
Total	130	100%

The predominance of material processes indicates that the lyrical persona represents her experiences primarily through actions and events associated with searching, waiting, praying, helping, and anticipating the arrival of her future partner. Nevertheless, the high frequencies of mental and verbal processes demonstrate that these actions are closely accompanied by internal emotions and repeated acts of communication. Rather than presenting physical activities alone, the lyrics consistently intertwine action with desire, expectation, and dialogue, creating a multidimensional representation of the persona's experience.

Meanwhile, relational processes contribute to the construction of the persona by expressing attributes, identities, and interpersonal relationships, allowing the speaker to define herself, her imagined partner, and their relationship. In contrast, behavioral processes occur only occasionally, and existential processes do not occur at all, suggesting that the lyrics focus less on physiological behavior or the mere existence of entities than on actions, thoughts, emotions, and interpersonal interaction. Overall, the distribution of process types demonstrates that the identity of the lyrical persona is constructed through the combined representation of action, cognition, emotion, communication, and relational meaning rather than through any single process type.

Constructing an Identity of Active Longing through Material Processes

Material processes constitute the largest process category in the lyrics, occurring 42 times (32.31%). According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), material processes represent actions and events that construe experiences of doing and happening. In *"Where Is My Husband!"*, however, these actions rarely portray completed achievements. Instead, they predominantly represent actions directed toward an anticipated future, including *"to find me"*, *"getting down with another"*, *"I get my hands on him"*, *"to give him to my loving arms"*, *"Tryna fix up his tie"*, *"to rush ya"*, and *"Hurry up here sir"*. Even clauses such as *"This man is testing me"* construe events that affect the persona's emotional experience rather than depicting ordinary physical activities.

These material processes construct the lyrical persona as someone actively orienting her life toward an imagined romantic relationship. Rather than waiting passively, she constantly imagines future encounters, anticipates actions, and projects events that have not yet occurred. Even so, action in the lyrics functions less as a description of present reality than as a linguistic representation of hope and expectation. Through these repeated

representations of doing and happening, the persona is constructed as persistently pursuing an idealized future despite its continued absence.

Constructing an Identity of Desire and Emotional Vulnerability through Mental Processes

Mental processes appear 31 times (23.85%), making them the second most dominant process type. Unlike the balanced distribution of perception, cognition, affection, and desire described by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the mental processes in the present data are overwhelmingly dominated by affection and desideration. Clauses such as *I only fear, He must need me, how my heart yearns for him, I need you, Baby I intend, I want it, I would like a ring, I would like a diamond ring, and That I could ever doubt it* repeatedly foreground the persona's wishes, hopes, fears, and emotional expectations.

The repetition of these mental processes positions the lyrical persona primarily within her internal world rather than within external reality. Her experiences are represented not through fulfilled relationships but through imagined possibilities and emotional anticipation. From Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) perspective, these linguistic representations contribute to identity construction by consistently positioning the speaker as emotionally invested in an unrealized relationship. The persona therefore emerges as hopeful, vulnerable, and emotionally expressive, with desire functioning as one of the defining characteristics of her identity.

Constructing an Identity through Communication and Interpersonal Negotiation

Verbal processes occur 30 times (23.08%), demonstrating that communication constitutes another dominant resource for identity construction. A striking feature of the data is the repeated use of clauses beginning with *Tell him*, which recurs throughout the chorus and bridge alongside expressions such as *He should holler, to tell me, Praying to Lord, Praying to the Lord, talk, talk about it, Forgive me God, and I do* (as it refers to the wedding vows). Rather than facilitating direct interaction, these verbal processes repeatedly construct communication as mediated through other people or directed toward God.

This pattern suggests that the persona negotiates her relationship through language despite the absence of direct contact with the imagined husband. The continual reliance on requests, prayers, and reported messages reflects both emotional distance and persistent hope. Communication therefore becomes a discursive strategy through which the persona maintains the imagined relationship. Instead of merely representing speech, the verbal processes construct an identity characterized by persistence, optimism, and an ongoing desire to establish interpersonal connection.

Constructing Relational Identity through States of Being

Relational processes occur 24 times (18.46%), consisting of circumstantial, attributive, and identifying relations. Unlike material and mental processes, which foreground actions and inner experiences, relational processes define the persona's identity through states of being, qualities, and relationships. Questions such as *Where the hell is my husband?, Where the hell is my lover?, and Is he far away?* repeatedly establish the relational position between the persona and the absent partner. Likewise, attributive clauses such as *Is he okay, I'm kind, I'm 5'5, I got brown eyes, and He must be out there getting ready* assign characteristics and conditions to participants represented in the lyrics.

These relational representations demonstrate that identity is constructed not only through actions and emotions but also through descriptions of personal attributes and interpersonal relationships. Particularly significant is the repeated emphasis on absence, distance, and incompleteness, which continually positions the persona in relation to someone who is imagined rather than physically present. Consequently, relational processes

reinforce the persona's identity as someone whose sense of self is closely connected to the expectation of a future marital relationship.

Discussion

The findings reveal that the identity of the lyrical persona is constructed through the complementary interaction of material, mental, verbal, and relational processes rather than through a single dominant process type. Material processes project the persona toward an anticipated future through actions associated with searching, waiting, preparation, and imagined encounters. Mental processes simultaneously foreground persistent desire, hope, fear, and emotional vulnerability, revealing that the persona's experiences are shaped more by aspiration than by fulfilled reality. Verbal processes sustain interpersonal relationships through repeated acts of communication, requests, and prayers, while relational processes define the persona through qualities, interpersonal positions, and the absence of the imagined husband. Collectively, these transitivity configurations construct a textual identity characterized by active longing, emotional expectation, communicative persistence, and relational incompleteness.

These findings support Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) proposition that transitivity is not merely a grammatical classification of process types but a semantic system through which language represents human experience. In the present study, the interaction among processes, participants, and circumstances extends beyond the representation of isolated events to construct a coherent experiential world. Material processes portray the persona's continual movement toward an anticipated relationship; mental processes reveal the emotional motivations underlying those actions; verbal processes mediate interpersonal interaction despite physical absence; and relational processes define the speaker's identity through states of being and interpersonal relationships. Thus, the experiential meanings realized by these transitivity configurations collectively shape the identity of the lyrical persona.

The findings also reinforce Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) perspective that identity is not a fixed personal attribute but an emergent and relational product of discourse. Rather than presenting identity as an inherent characteristic, the lyrics repeatedly construct the persona through the linguistic patterns that represent hope, uncertainty, longing, communication, and self-definition. The repetition of these experiential meanings enables listeners to recognize a consistent textual identity across the song. Thus, identity emerges progressively through discourse, demonstrating that linguistic choices do not merely reflect identity but actively participate in its construction.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of distinguishing the lyrical persona from the empirical artist. Consistent with Culler's concept of the lyrical persona, the first-person voice throughout *"Where Is My Husband!"* should not be interpreted as a direct autobiographical representation of Raye herself. Instead, the transitivity patterns construct the experiences, emotions, and interpersonal relationships of a textual speaker created within the song. This distinction allows the analysis to remain grounded in linguistic evidence while avoiding assumptions about the songwriter's personal life, thereby strengthening the validity of the interpretation.

The present findings are broadly consistent with previous studies demonstrating that transitivity serves as an effective analytical framework for revealing meaning and identity in song lyrics (Dewi Max et al., 2023; Fathimatuzzahra et al., 2025; Hamzah et al., 2026; Manik & Napitupulu, 2026). However, whereas many previous studies primarily focus on describing the frequency of process types or relating them to general thematic meanings, the present study extends this line of research by explaining how transitivity configurations collectively construct the identity of the lyrical persona. By integrating Halliday and

Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity framework with Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) discourse-based theory of identity and Culler's (2015) concept of the lyrical persona, this study demonstrates that identity in song lyrics is constructed through the interaction of experiential meanings rather than through isolated grammatical choices. This integrated perspective contributes to *Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)* by illustrating how transitivity analysis can move beyond grammatical description toward explaining the discursive construction of identity in contemporary popular music.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated how transitivity constructs the identity of the lyrical persona in Raye's "*Where Is My Husband!*" by employing Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity framework, interpreted through Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) discourse-based perspective on identity construction and Culler's (2017) concept of the lyrical persona. The analysis demonstrates that the identity of the lyrical persona is not represented through a single linguistic resource but emerges from the interaction of multiple transitivity processes.

The findings reveal that material processes are the most dominant process type, followed by mental, verbal, and relational processes, while behavioral processes occur only minimally and existential processes are absent. More importantly, each dominant process contributes a distinct dimension to the construction of the lyrical persona's identity. Material processes construct the persona as actively pursuing an imagined future relationship, mental processes foreground desire, hope, and emotional vulnerability, verbal processes sustain interpersonal relationships through repeated communication and prayer, and relational processes define the persona through qualities, interpersonal positions, and the absence of the imagined husband. Collectively, these experiential meanings construct the lyrical persona as an individual characterized by active longing, emotional expectation, communicative persistence, and relational incompleteness.

The study also demonstrates that transitivity analysis can extend beyond identifying grammatical patterns to explain how linguistic choices construct identity within literary discourse. By integrating *Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)* with discourse-based identity theory and the concept of the lyrical persona, this research provides a more comprehensive explanation of how experiential meanings contribute to identity construction in contemporary song lyrics. Furthermore, distinguishing the lyrical persona from the empirical artist enables the interpretation to remain grounded in textual evidence rather than autobiographical assumptions.

Although this study provides insight into the construction of identity through transitivity, it is limited to a single song and focuses exclusively on the experiential metafunction. Future studies may examine a larger corpus of songs by Raye or other contemporary artists to explore whether similar patterns of identity construction occur across different musical contexts. Comparative studies involving multiple genres, albums, or artists could further enrich the understanding of how linguistic choices shape different representations of identity.

Future research may also integrate the transitivity system with other dimensions of Systemic Functional Linguistics, such as mood, modality, appraisal, or thematic structure, to provide a more comprehensive account of meaning-making in song lyrics. In addition, combining transitivity analysis with approaches from discourse analysis, pragmatics, or corpus linguistics may offer broader perspectives on how identity is negotiated through language in contemporary popular music.

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