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Language as Ideology: Transitivity and Ergativity in the Female Voices of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*

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Abstract

Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* describes the lives of six characters (three male, three female) from early childhood to old age. While writing this novel Woolf adopted a radically new way of writing : instead of having her characters described by an omniscient narrator she chose to simply present the characters' own thought through long series of soliloquies. The absence of an omniscient narrator makes the individual speeches/thoughts the only identifying factor of each personality. In this paper I will prove though a detailed analysis of the ergative and transitive construals used how each female character has its own linguistic identity and how the 'individual' language reflects the character's ideology. I investigated three significant stages of the females' lives : childhood, early adulthood and old age. This investigation did not only enable me to make a comparison between the different characters but to also point out evolutions within one character's ideology. This paper focuses on the self-image of the three females as it surfaces in their own language, where relevant I discussed other aspects like the view on other people and the view on nature and objects around them.

The material processes investigated can be subdivided in ergative construals on the one hand and transitive ones on the other hand, both represent a completely different experience of causality and thus reflect a different view on actions and events. The transitive construal consists of an all-controlling ACTOR who is in full control of the activity carried out. This activity can be carried out onto a totally passive GOAL, a participant which does not actively participate in the activity but is submitted to it. The ergative construal presents a totally different causal model and centres around a main participant, the MEDIUM, involved in an activity which can either be externally or internally instigated. The ambiguity as to the source of action can be lifted by adding a second participant, the INSTIGATOR, who is responsible by setting the activity in motion. However, the medium remains actively involved in the activity unlike the passive goal participant of the transitive construal.   The choices in construals when describing their internal and external experiences, mirror

the way the characters in *The Waves* experience causality and allow us to get a clear view of the characters' worldview and self-image. All claims made in this paper are backed up by extensive examples and statistical data. The linguistic framework was mainly taken from Halliday and Davidse.

1   Introduction

   In 1929 Virginia Woolf quoted part of Wordsworth's *Prelude* in her diary.[1] Although she rarely quoted other authors, she found aspects in this particular poem which interested her immensely. At that time Woolf was writing what would become her magnum opus *The Waves* and was much preoccupied with writing in a 'new' way. *The Waves* describes the lives of six characters (three male, three female) from early childhood to old age. Although all six characters have different names and lead different lives, Woolf often claimed they were six aspects of a single personality. The quote from Wordsworth's Prelude reveals Woolf's fascination with people's inner lives and the role of language in them. Woolf believed that people's identities were largely formed by their individual use of language instead of merely being the product of outer circumstances. It is indeed through language that people shape their experience of their surroundings and their memories.   One's use of language does not only reveal how one sees oneself and the outside world - for the way one thinks about something influences the way one speaks about it - it also gives each person a unique (linguistic) identity. In Woolf's eyes language did indeed serve such a dual purpose : it is not only a reality-describing but also a reality-creating device.

   While writing *The Waves* Woolf chose what was at that time, a rather revolutionary way of presenting her characters to the reader. Discarding the traditional technique of having them described by an omniscient narrator, she reduced the narrative structure to the bare minimum : she rendered each character's thoughts through long series of soliloquies, interrupted every now and then by descriptions of the sea, symbolising

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Notes

 On Thursday August 22nd Woolf wrote : "Here I will copy some lines I want to remember" and quoted part of Wordsworth's Prelude.

> The matter that detains us now may seem
> to many, neither dignified enough
> nor arduous, yet will not be scorned by them
> who, looking inward, have observed the ties
> that bind the perishable hours of life
> each to the other & the curious props
> by which the world of memory and thought
> exists and is sustained.

the different stages in life. The reader's task then, is not an easy one. With the characters' thoughts as the only tool, it is up to the reader to draw six individuals from those soliloquies. In this paper I will show through a detailed analysis of the distribution of transitive and ergative construals how the characters' worldview influences their use of language and how their language shapes them as individuals.

This paper will fall into three main parts. First I will discuss the theoretical framework I have used and the methodology I have adopted. Second, I will expand on the analysis of the female characters. A third part will present some general conclusions.

2   Theoretical framework and methodology

The aim of this paper is to reconstruct each female's (shifting) self-image and worldview from the language she uses. As Woolf portrays her characters only through represented speech/thought, it is via a detailed study of these soliloquies that their linguistically and ideologically different personalities will be laid bare. I investigated the three female voices in *The Waves*, named Susan, Jinny and Rhoda. The analysis focuses on three important stages in each character's life. First of all childhood, or the soliloquies found at the very beginning of the novel. Second, adulthood or the coming of age of the girls. And third, old age or the stage during which all three female characters reflect upon their past. This division into stages not only enabled me to draw parallels between the three characters as they are represented in each stage, but also to study evolutions within each character's life.   In each of these stages I investigated each character's self-image, their view of other people and their view of nature and objects around them. This paper will focus mainly on the female's self-image, linking it up with the other two parameters when relevant.

To be able to investigate exactly how a character sees herself, others and nature, we need to investigate how the participants involved are presented in the language used. Therefore I concentrated on material processes, which describe goings-on and events, thus giving a clear indication of the participants involved and the extent of their roles.   The way people or entities are portrayed as participating in processes does not only reveal the nature of these processes, but also lays bare perceived power-relationships between participants. For the discussion of material processes I based myself on Halliday 1994.   He describes material processes as 'processes of doing. They express the notion that some entity does something which may be done to some other entity." Material processes give a very good indication of how a character perceives actions and the causal links between events in the outer world. To get a clear view on the exact extent of the causal links and the role of each participant, I investigated the distribution of ergative and transitive construals as described in Davidse's studies on the subject (Davidse, 1992).

Davidse distinguishes two main models, which reflect totally different

causal links and which are semantically and formally very different. Both models can be sub-divided into a middle and an effective type, thus creating four possible construals for a character to describe his/her experience. Davidse state that the transitive model is a linear one, describing an action that originates in one very clear energy-source, the Actor. If the action stops there and includes only and actor and a process, the construal is called the transitive:middle (also better known as the intransitive). However, the activity can be extended onto a second participant, which is called the Goal, and which the activity generated by the Actor is performed upon. This type of construal consisting of Actor, Goal and Process is called the transitive:effective.

>   She jumps   :   Transitive:middle
>   Act Process
>
>   She picks berries :   Transitive:effective
>   Act Proc Goal

In terms of causality, the transitive model is a very straightforward one : the source of action is, in both sub-models, the Actor. If the action is carried out on to a second participant, it is a totally passive one, which does not participate in the activity.

The ergative model is totally different in that it describes a nuclear model rather than a linear one. It construal focuses on a central participant involved in an activity, called the Medium. A structure consisting of Medium Process only is called the ergative:middle.

This construal can be characterised by its voice-neutralisation, in other words, it incorporates both the passive and the active form. The ergative:middle elicits the question about who or what the origin of the action is : although it is obvious that the Medium co-participates in the activity, it is not clear whether the activity is self-or externally instigated. The question about the instigating force is resolved when a second participant is added, viz. the Instigator, thus forming the ergative:effective construal. This participant is revealed as the force that sets into motion the event. Although the Medium does not ,in this construal, instigate the event, it is still actively involved and co-participates, clearly setting it apart from the Goal-participant of transitive:effective construals.

>   The twig drops   :   Ergative:middle
>   Medium   Process
>
>   She dropped the twig   :   Ergative:effective
>   Inst Proc   Medium

One of the main recognition criteria for the ergative construal is that every middle construal should allow for its effective counterpart and vice versa, a rule which clearly does not apply to the transitive model.[1]

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1 This recognition criterion is used in other traditions of works on ergativity, for instance in the Cobuild Dictionary. This dictionary states : "The ergative verb is

She slept   :   Transitive:middle   *Someone slept her

She pulled his hair :   Transitive: effective   * His hair pulled

In this paper I will repeatedly refer to these four separate models with their different semantic features.[1]

The investigation into the occurrence of these four models and especially into the distribution of the four participant roles, reveals the (perceived) power-relationships in the novel: who or what acts on whom and in what way? Several patterns of foregrounding were taken into consideration as being significant for the analysis.   First of all a statistical breakdown of structures for each character (in each stage) was completed. These statistics give an indication of which construals predominate and also of the evolutions in the choice for one construal over another.   However, these statistics have only a relative importance as the analysis I carried out does not only draw on quantitative results. Halliday describes foregrounding as "prominence which is motivated". (Halliday, 1973). I also took the following types of motivated foregrounding into consideration in my analysis :
-        deviation from the norm : e.g. one ergative construal in a completely transitive text.
-        clusters: groups of examples belonging to one particular construals found together.
-        literal repetition of the exact same sentence.

3   Analysis

This detailed analysis will consist of three subsections, which will concentrate on the most significant aspects for each female character. I will mainly concentrate on their self-image. Each detailed discussion will be followed by a short summary.

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used both in the pattern V and in the pattern Vn, for instance :The vase broke and Fred broke the lamp. (...) ergative verbs allow you to describe an action from the point of view of the action or from the point of view of something which is affected by the action."

1   Transitive: middleAutonomous event with only one possible energy-source (Actor)
Transitive: effective   Unilateral causal model with actor as the only
                possible energy-source and with totally passive goal.
                Maximum agent-patient asymmetry.
Ergative: middle semi-autonomous event with co-participating medium.
                elicits question about instigating force.
                voice neutralization.
Ergative: effective   Co-participating causal model with instigator as energy-source and
                co-   participating medium.
                        reduced agent-patient asymmetry.

3.1.1 Susan: analysis

The first female character, Susan, is portrayed as an introverted character who prefers the solitary life at her father's farm to the social scene in the city. Hence, solitude and nature are important aspects in her life and her experience of her surroundings and of her own behaviour is highly influenced by them. In the childhood stage Susan describes her stay at a school together with the other characters in the novel. The adulthood stage focuses on her arrival at her father's farm after a long stay at a Swiss boarding school. In the last stage investigated Susan reflects upon her life. Any evolutions that take place within Susan's perceptions and descriptions should be seen in the broader context of changes and shifts in her life.

The foregrounding patterns are most revealing in Susan's view of nature/objects and her own role in her natural surroundings : the subject-matter of the novel is backed up by the distribution of ergative and transitive construals.

(KEY TABLE 1.1)

Susan's childhood world is -like that of the other children in the novel- a largely transitive one. Descriptions of natural events as well as her own activities are described in unambiguous terms : there is always one clear energy-source. At times the activities are extended and carried out on a second participant which is a completely passive goal. Thus, examples like the following, portray Susan as in control of her own activities.

> I walk (p. 50)
> I sit (p. 80)
> I jumped up (p. 51)

When she decides to involve a second participant she submits this one to her will, revealing a feeling of being powerful and all-controlling.

> I will drink water (p. 12)
> I lap sweet milk (p. 21)

For natural events too, two variations of the transitive model are used throughout the childhood period. On the one hand, natural events which are generated by a clear energy-source or in other words by a natural actor (transitive : middle).

> Birds are singing (p.9)
> Moths come in (p.13)
> Hot steam hisses up (p.21)

On the other hand, there are transitive construals in which human actors act unilaterally on passive goals (transitive:effective).

> Biddy has smacked down the bucket on the kitchen flags (p. 10)

Rhoda is sucking a crust (p. 21)
I lap sweet milk (p. 21)

(KEY TABLE 2.1)

This somewhat asymmetrical world makes way for a model in which nature and Susan become equal partners. A less aggressive model is pictured through an increasing use of ergative construals, especially in descriptions of natural events and Susan's dealings with nature. After a long stay at a Swiss boarding school, Susan returns to her father's farm. She decides to retreat into nature and solitude rather than make her debut in society. The adulthood scene describes Susan's daily routine at the farm and her growing symbiosis with her surroundings. Ergative construals are foregrounded in her descriptions of the natural events she witnesses and takes part in.

In the adulthood scene, Susan depicts an original image of nature as a semi-autonomous world, not being submitted to human beings. The ergative model ,in its two realisations, predominates. First of all, the ergative middle, which describes an event in which nature or an object takes on the role of the central participant, namely the medium.

It (the day) will soften (p. 77)
It (the day) will warm (p. 77)
The sheep gather (p. 78)
Lambs warm (p. 78)
The drop spills (p. 79)

This way of describing nature does attribute a certain independence and power to it, but it differs from the transitive:middle used in the childhood scene in that it DOES allow for another participant to lie at the basis of the event (possible instigator). In other words, as an adult Susan perceives links between events and wonders about responsibility for the activities she perceives.

Although these actions clearly portray nature as an active, co-participating force, it is not clear whether the activities are self-instigated or whether they are set into motion by another force. The very question about a possible energy-source is evoked by the ergative:middle and it is one that cannot be easily resolved. In most cases the context disambiguates the situation. The sheep for instance probably gather out of their own accord at night, when they huddle together because of the cold. The lambs, on the other hand, are described as being brought in by humans to warm by the fire. However, in other cases the context does not provide enough information to resolve the question about the instigating force. Tentative answers can be given if we look at those ergative construals in which the energy-source is mentioned explicitly.

The wind lifts the blind (p.77)
I lift the heavy flour (p.77)
The heron stretches its wings (p.77)
I stretch the flour (p.77)

The ergative:effective construals in which nature/objects take on the role of medium contain two possible instigators : either nature itself, or Susan. The fact that both are perceived as taking on the same role : namely that of setting into motion natural events, is a first sign of Susan's symbiosis with nature. She perceives nature as being and acting on the same level. Thus, when she decides to involve a natural participant in her actions she no longer submits it to her will. The examples mentioned above are a striking sign of her unison with her natural surroundings. Not only are Susan and nature described as possible instigators, they are also both described as performing the exact same type of activity :lifting and stretching. The shift in the second stage from a transitive to an ergative model to describe nature serves a double purpose. Not only does it reveal a possible energy-source lying at the basis of natural events -which was excluded in the transitive:middle in the childhood stage - it also dispenses nature of the victimised goal-role it previously had.

Entwined with her changing view on nature is Susan's changing self-image. Whereas she depicted herself as a powerful actor in the childhood period, she portrays her own actions as less aggressive in the adulthood period. On the one hand Susan portrays herself as being solely responsible for her own activities, by using the transitive middle construal

> I go (p. 77)
> I step (p. 77)
> I lean (p. 78)
> I sit (p. 80)

On the other hand, when she chooses to include a second participant she opts for the ergative effective construal in which she is the instigator. As was said earlier, this points to a growing awareness that when she is dealing with the objects around her, she no longer controls them.

Instead, she sets into motion forces already present in them. Both parts of her own body as well as objects and nature around her contain the possibility to move or act within themselves.

> I suckle my children (p. 78)
> I lift the heavy flour (p. 79)
> I plunge my hands (p. 79)
> I break the stalk (p. 79)

(KEY TABLE 1.3)

Susan's perception of nature and her own activities does not change drastically in the third stage. In this stage Susan is still living at her father's farm. An old woman now, she reflects upon her life in a rather pessimistic tone. Whereas her main image of nature as a living entity, co-participating in ergative construals remains intact, it is her self-image which shifts. When she depicts herself, she reveals an actor of mainly transitive:middle construals. In control of her own actions but hardly intervening in natural and social relations. If she does choose to involve a

second participant, she returns to her childhood tendency of submitting her surroundings to her will, describing them as passive goals of a transitive effective structure.

> I have netted over strawberry beds (p. 150)
> I snip off hollyhocks (p. 151)
> I stitched the pears and plums into white bags (p. 151)

This, together with the fact that the instigators of the natural events are Susan's children might be an indication of Susan's realisation that her life is drawing to an end and that her children will be her successors in the natural cycle of life.

> He (my son) heaves it open (p. 150)
> They (my children) break the meshes (p. 150)

(KEY TABLE 1.4)

3.1.2   Conclusion

The investigation into the distribution of transitive and ergative construals reveals significant shifts which are linked with changing circumstances in Susan's life. These shifts are most striking in Susan's self-image and her view on nature which are closely linked.

Susan's self-image shifts from an image in which she is an autonomous actor, in control of her own behaviour and also carrying out actions on her surroundings. This self-image is reflected in the use of transitive construals. Changing circumstances and Susan's developing maturity confront her with a totally different view on her own behaviour and her impact on her surroundings. The presence of a considerable amount of ergative construals reveals Susan as setting into motion forces present in nature around her, rather than submitting them to her will. The aggressive transitive:effective structure gradually makes way for the ergative:effective, symbolising Susan's symbiosis with nature. Coming to the end of the natural cycle of her life, Susan passes on her task as instigator of natural forces to the next generation and returns to the initial portrayal of her own activities in transitive terms.

The view on nature as it is reflected in the three stage investigated evolves with Susan's changing self-image (and vice versa). Susan starts off portraying nature as either being fully autonomous (transitive:middle) or as the complete opposite, namely as the totally passive goal (transitive:effective). However, as she immerses herself in nature during the second stage of her life, her view on it changes radically. Nature appears both as an instigator of natural processes (ergative:effective) which places it on the exact same level as Susan herself and as a co-participating medium of activities generated by either a human or natural instigator (ergative:middle and ergative:effective). Its victimised goal-role completely disappears. Whereas Susan's task as instigator draws to a close by returning to the transitive model, nature's active role is sustained in the third stage as well.

3.2.1 JINNY : analysis

Jinny is the second character analysed.   Her personality differs significantly from Susan's and signs of this are reflected in her use of language. Jinny is portrayed as the most social and lively of all three female characters in the novel. Her main purpose in life is to enjoy herself and to display her charms to the rest of the world. As a child she is portrayed as being particularly interested in her own movements. In the adult period she moves to London where she becomes part of the social scene. Her exuberant behaviour reaches a culminating point at a party she visits together with the third female character (Rhoda). This particular scene reveals a number of striking aspects about Jinny's peculiar self-image. The third scene reveals a major shift in self-image. Main themes in Jinny's life are her self-centredness and her view on her body as a sort of (semi)-autonomous instrument over which she has little or no control.

(KEY TABLE 2.1)

Jinny's childhood is depicted in mainly transitive terms, just as in Susan's case.   The events described are mainly Jinny's own activities and her bodily sensations. They are all transitive:middle construals which reveal that Jinny perceives herself a as fully autonomous entity, responsible for her own activities and movements.

> I burn (p. 10)
> I run (p. 11)
> I cried (p. 11)
> I quiver (p. 12)
> I dance (p. 12)

(KEY TABLE 2.2)

It is in the second stage that Jinny's perception of her own body evolves in a peculiar way. This striking evolution is already hinted at earlier in the novel, and finds its root in the childhood scene.

The self-image depicted in the adulthood scene, reveals Jinni's perception of having a split- personality. On the one hand there are activities over which she has full control and which are generated by an 'I'-actor. On the other hand there are a number of ergative construals in which Jinny's body -or parts of it- take on the role of the medium. Thus, she portrays her body as a semi-autonomous participant, at times acting in ways she cannot control.

This split originates in the childhood period where a peculiar use of the verb 'to move' can be observed. To move is a verb that can be used either ergatively or transitively, depending on which participants are involved. [1] On the one hand it can be used ergatively as in the following

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1 Cobuild states the following definition of TO MOVE : 'When you move something

examples.

> The leaves went on moving (p. 11)
> What moved the leaves? (p. 11)

It is clear from the alternation that we are dealing with a fully ergative verb. On the other hand the verb cannot be used ergatively when describing the (bodily) movements of a human participant. The alternation 'I move, who/what moves me' is highly marked. Yet it is exactly this alternation which Jinny uses to describe her bodily movements.

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or when it moves, its position changes and it does not remain still.' TO MOVE is in this case an ergative verb. However, in all other contexts TO MOVE is considered to be a transitive verb in Cobuild : 'When you move, you change position or go to a different place' and 'if a company moves they leave the building where they have been living or working and they go to live or work in a different place, taking their positions with them.' Apparently, there are restrictions to the ergative use of the verb, being that if the central participant is human (or representing a human/humans) it cannot be used ergatively. I would like to remark here that there is one case in which a human participant is involved and where TO MOVE is used ergatively. When a person is told/forced or helped to move by someone else or by a higher authority, the ergative alternation is not marked anymore. E.g. 'They moved him from Sales to R&D.'

> I move . What moves my heart, my legs? (p. 11)

In this alternation Jinny wonders about a possible instigating force behind her movements. It is clear, though, that she does not see herself as the source of origin, hence the question 'what moves my heart, my legs' instead of 'who moves them'. In this way she already hints at her feeling that her body seems to move beyond her control and she wonders about the driving force behind it.

Similar ergative:middle construals can be found in the adulthood stage.

> My legs rub smoothly together (p. 80)

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Our bodies unite (p. 83)

At times the instigator behind her movements is revealed as being her own body or part of it.

The bar at the back of my throat lowers itself. (p. 82)

This last example clearly illustrates Jinny's awareness that she cannot control her own actions when her body takes over control. The awareness of the split-personality is enhanced by a literal split in choice of actors of the transitive construals in the adulthood stage. On the one hand there are actions generated by the autonomous 'I'-actor, on the other hand, we find clusters of transitive construals generated by Jinny's body - or parts of it. Presenting her actions thus, she stresses the awareness that the I-persona (Jinny) and her body do not always coincide.

I sit (p. 80)
I enter (p. 81)
I slide (p. 81)
I stoop (p. 83)

My body stands still (p. 82)
My blood runs on (p. 82)
(My) words crowd and cluster (p. 82)
they(my words) push forth (p. 82)
They (my words) jostle and mount (p. 82).

(KEY TABLE 2.3)

The third stage investigated reveals a major shift in Jinny's self-image. The scene focuses on Jinny's awareness that she is losing her power to attract people and that her body does not seem to work as it used to. This realisation is reflected in the role she allocates to her body or parts of it. For one, the split-personality of the second stage disappears completely : all activities in which Jinny or her body are involved are introduced by the same, fully autonomous 'I'- actor. Second, the ergative construals found in the previous two stages disappear as well.   Jinny's body does feature, however, in the last scene investigated. Portrayed in earlier stages as a (semi)-autonomous entity it is completely reduced to an utterly passive participant in this last scene : the object of Jinny's cosmetic actions in a last attempt to use her body as a tool to attract, submitting it to her will now it has lost its own power.

I raise my arm (p. 152)
I powder my face (p. 154)
I redden my lips (p. 154)
I make my eyebrows sharper (p. 154)

(KEY TABLE 2.4)

3.2.2 Conclusion

The main theme revealed in the analysis is Jinny's extra-ordinary self-image, which changes as her life progresses. Throughout her whole life Jinny is fascinated by her own body and the driving force behind her movements. Already aware of her body's enormous power in her childhood, she wonders about the possible instigating force behind it. In the adult period Jinny's body seems to lead a life of its own and this is partly mirrored by a split made between actions generated by the I-persona and those generated by part of her body. The image given of her body is one of a semi-autonomous or even a fully autonomous participant over which Jinny does not seem to have any control. As Jinny's body grows older and her beauty and attraction fade, the split-personality aspect disappears and makes way for a portrayal in which the I-persona is the sole active participant Jinny's body is reduced to a completely passive goal-participant.

3.3.1 RHODA: analysis

The third female character, Rhoda, is a particularly interesting one in that she could be described as an 'apocalyptic' version of Woolf herself. Haunted by her fear of other people, her inability to function as a social creature and her black, depressed moods, Rhoda tries to escape by means of her imagination and her longing for another world. At the end of her life she commits suicide by drowning herself. Her use of language clearly reveals her main fears. In the childhood stage, Rhoda is pictured as a solitary child, absorbed in her games and an imaginary world. The second stage investigated, describes Rhoda at the exact same party at which Jinny is present. In this particular scene, Rhoda's negative self-image and her negative view on other people reach a painful climax. The last stage describes Rhoda's climb up a Spanish hill from which she can see the sea she will drown herself in. This third scene presents a striking shift in self-image.

Rhoda's descriptions of her own activities can be characterised by a split between two different worlds. On the one hand there is the 'real' world , in which she has to interact which other people which is transitive and in which Rhoda depicts a negative self-image. On the other hand there is the world of her games and imagination (henceforth the dream world) which is ergative and in which Rhoda and her surroundings co-participate. It is only in this dreamworld that Rhoda assumes the control she does not possess in her social interactions.

(KEY TABLE 3.1)

Unlike the other female characters, Rhoda's childhood scene includes a striking amount of ergative construals. These are found in clusters which makes them doubly significant. The activities they describe are Rhoda's childhood games in which she makes petals float in a basin filled with water, pretending they are ships. It is a solitary game in which she

becomes fully absorbed. Rhoda uses ergative:effective structures in which she takes up the role of instigator : setting into motion forces present in her (inanimate) surroundings.

> I tip the basin up (p. 15)
> I will drop a twig (p. 16)
> I will drop a stone (p. 16)
> I will rock the brown basin (16)

The mediums are not submitted to her control, but are perceived as co-participating.   Similar structures are found at the end of the scene when Rhoda describes her actions in the solitude of her room, before she goes to sleep.

> I stretch my toes (p. 22)
> I spread my body (p. 22)

In contrast with this imaginary world there is the world of social interaction. This world is a completely transitive world in which actors are fully responsible for their own actions and in which goals are passive participants, submitted to the will of powerful actors.   The overall picture of Rhoda which surfaces here is a negative one : Rhoda perceives herself as being impotent, not capable of action, thus contrasting herself with other people whom she describes as powerful, and, at times goal-directing actors of transitive construals.

Four different types of techniques are used to contrast Rhoda and the other people.

First of all there are the transitive:middle construals in which Rhoda uses a negative clause to describe her own activities.

> I cannot write (p. 18)
> I cannot sink (p. 22)
> I cannot fall (p. 22)

Here, Rhoda describes her failing attempts to act like other people. Although transitive:middle construals usually portray an autonomous actor, the negative clauses undo the effect.   Not only does she use a negative, she also clearly contrasts her own behaviour with that of the other children. By using the same structure but adding a negative, Rhoda sharply outlines her feeling of impotence.

> Louis writes, Susan writes, Neville writes, Jinny writes even Bernard has now begun   to write. But I cannot write. (p. 18)

A second technique is the use of what Halliday calls superventives (Halliday, 1968 : 179-215).   Although at first sight regular transitive:middle construals depicting a fully autonomous actor, they describe activities which supervene, or happen to the actor and over which he/she has no control whatsoever.(footnote for reference)

> I sink (p. 23)
> I fall (p. 23)
> I sink down (p. 23)

Third, there are the transitive:effective structures in which Rhoda describes the other people as autonomous and goal-directed participants and where she herself takes on the role of victimised and passive goal.

> My aunt has come to fetch me (p. 23)
> They sweep me (p. 23)

Maybe the most poignant signs of Rhoda's negative self-image are the passive construals in which she becomes the grammatical subject :foregrounding herself as a passive goal.

> I am turned (p. 23)
> I am tumbled (p. 23)
> I am stretched (p. 23)

Other people, though, are all portrayed as autonomous actors, both in transitive:middle and transitive:effective construals.

> Neville writes (p. 18)
> Mrs Constable runs (p. 23)
> Jinny is picking currants (p. 16)
> She takes a lump of chalk (p. 18)

(KEY TABLE 3.2)

This split, which already originates in her childhood years reaches a painful climax at a party she visits together with Jinny. This party constitutes the second stage investigated.   Again, we find the contrast between the world of her imagination in which ergatives are used on the one hand, as in :

> The swallow dips her wings (p. 83)
> Pools reflect marble columns (p. 83)
> I rock my basins (p. 84)
> The thorn tree shakes its shadow (p. 85)
> The foam fills the rims (p. 85)

On the other hand we find examples of the frightening and aggressive transitive world.

> They throw faint smiles (p. 83)
> They mask their cruelty (p. 83)
> They bring their fists down (p. 84)

The atmosphere of aggression, which is already created thematically, is enhanced by the choice of transitive:effective construals.   The other people at the party are described as powerful actors, who make other people the goal of their actions.   Rhoda's descriptions of her own activities

paint a bleak picture of an impotent actor. This feeling of impotence is created by the use of negatives and modals, which suggest non-realisation of the actions in question.

> I cannot move (p. 84)
> I must prevaricate (p. 84)
> I must take his hand (p. 83)
> I must fence them off (p. 84)

Apart from this contrast Rhoda uses other techniques which dramatise her feeling of helplessness. Most striking are the transitive:effective examples in which she takes on the role of a passive goal.

> Arrows pierce me (p. 84)
> Ridicule pierces me (p. 84)
> Their tongues cut me (p. 84)

Although the actors of these construals are not literally the other people, they are still elements metonymically associated with them, as they are descriptions of the behaviour of the other guests. Is it other people's attitudes towards her that Rhoda perceives as cutting and piercing. A variation on this transitive:effective construal are the clusters of passives, which foreground Rhoda as a passive goal-participant. The other people are implied as grammatical agents of the following examples, which mirrors Rhoda's perception of others as her aggressors.

> I am pinned down (p. 84)
> I am exposed (p. 84)
> I am flung far (p. 85)
> I am thrust back (p. 85)
> I am interrupted (p. 85)
> I am to be broken (p. 85)
> I am to be derided (p. 85)
> I am to be cast up (p. 85)
> I am scorched by hot breath (p. 85)

(KEY TABLE 3.3)

The third scene ,or the old age stage, reveals a significant shift in self-image. As Rhoda retreats into solitude before she decides to drown herself, she no longer focuses on the behaviour of other people. When she does choose to portray others she does this in her memories of the past. The image of other people as it is mirrored in these examples corresponds with the negative view revealed in the childhood and adulthood scenes. It is also only in these traumatic memories that she portrays herself as a passive goal-participant of transitive:effective structures or as the foregrounded subject of passive construals

> You chained me (p. 161)
> I have been stained (p. 161)
> I have been corrupted (p. 161)

The major shift that takes place is Rhoda's description of her own activities as being autonomous and at times even goal-directed. The transitive:effective examples no longer contain negatives and very few modal are used.

> I pulled up my stockings (p. 161)
> I held up shade after shade (p. 161)
> I threw my bunch (p. 162)
> I have sliced waters (p. 162)
> I picked a carnation (p. 162)
> I fingered an old bone (p. 162)
> I press my hand against the door (p. 163)

However, the most striking shift in this last stage is perhaps the symbiosis of the transitive world (the real world) and the ergative world (the imaginary world). The following two ergative examples are extremely significant in this respect.

> The waves roll me over (p. 163)
> The sea dissolves me (p. 163)

These two examples are a fore-boding of Rhoda's suicide : she will drown herself in the sea she describes. This act, which is part of her experience of the real world around her, is described in terms previously only used to describe her imaginary world. Instead of opting for a transitive construals, Rhoda chooses two ergatives. In her suicide the real world and her dreamworld come together as she finally manages to make her final escape.

(KEY TABLE 3.4)

3.3.2 Conclusion

The main themes in Rhoda's soliloquies are her fear of other people and her negative self-image. Both are expressed in the subject-matter and reflected in the distribution of ergative and transitive construals. A clear split is made between an aggressive world in which Rhoda is victimised and impotent and other people are powerful (transitive) on the one hand and an ideal world in which instigators and mediums co-participate (ergative).

The self-image revealed is primarily a negative one. Both in the childhood scene and the adulthood one Rhoda portrays herself as an impotent actor on the one hand and a passive goal on the other hand. This negative self-image shifts in the third scene where the frightened Rhoda makes way for an autonomous and goal-directed actor. This change comes about just before Rhoda commits suicide and mirrors in a way her final escape from the real world. Indeed, Rhoda tries to escape from the cruelty she perceives by means of an imaginary world. The self-image and worldview in these stages is radically different in that it is expressed by ergative construals. Thus picturing a world in which there

are equal partners, where mediums co-participate in the activities and where instigators do not submit their surroundings to their will. Rhoda describes herself as such an active but non-aggressive instigator. It is in escaping from reality that she feels most powerful and this is also reflected in the switch to a more powerful image just before her final escape.

 Rhoda's negative self-image is supported by her view on other people. They are consistently described as autonomous and powerful actors of transitive processes. Very often they are actors of goal-directed transitive: effective structures of which Rhoda is the goal-participant.

4   General Conclusion

 In writing *The Waves*, Woolf illustrated that language can in fact create reality as well as describe it. In this novel she successfully managed to bring her characters alive without describing them extensively, but by merely giving them voices. In this paper I have shown that the characters' language does indeed shape them as individuals. Through a detailed analysis of the transitive and ergative construals in the novel I have laid bare three very different (linguistic) identities. The shifting patterns of transitive and ergative construals do not only reveal three very different females, but also mirror important shifts in each character's life and ideology. In each of the three women's lives, the self-image evolves, reaching a climax in the adulthood stage. This evolution is in each case built up through changes in transitive/ergative patterns. Although the three female personalities unravelled through the analysis are very different, there are some striking similarities in the ways they 'use' transitive and ergative construals. The transitive model is mainly used to polarise two worlds : one of power on the one hand, and one of impotence on the other hand. The ergative construal, with its co-participating medium, is used to describe a less aggressive world in which a symbiosis between participants takes place.

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TABLES

Table 1.1 SUSAN : distribution of transitive and ergative construals

	TRANSITIVE	ERGATIVE
CHILDHOOD	93%	7%
ADULTHOOD	76%	24%
OLD AGE	85%	15%

Table 1.2 SUSAN AND NATURE : breakdown into particpant roles : Childhood

	SUSAN	NATURE
ACTOR (middle and effective)	25%	18%
GOAL	0%	19%
MEDIUM (middle and effective)	0%	7%
INSTIGATOR	0%	1%

Table 1.3 SUSAN AND NATURE : breakdown into participant roles : Adulthood

	SUSAN	NATURE
ACTOR (middle and effective)	28%	38%

GOAL	0%	16%
MEDIUM (middle and effective)	0%	19%
INSTIGATOR	8%	3%

Table 1.4 SUSAN AND NATURE : breakdown into participant roles : Old age

	SUSAN	NATURE
ACTOR (middle and effective)	41%	21%
GOAL	0%	27%
MEDIUM (middle and effective)	0%	14%
INSTIGATOR	6%	5%

Table 2.1 JINNY : distribution of transitive and ergative construals

	TRANSITIVE	ERGATIVE
CHILDHOOD	74%	26%
ADULTHOOD	81%	19%
OLD AGE	90%	10%

Table 2.2 JINNY : I-PERSONA AND BODY : breakdown into participant roles : Childhood

	I-PERSONA	BODY
ACTOR (middle and effective)	38%	3%
GOAL	0%	0%
MEDIUM (middle and effective)	0%	6%
INSTIGATOR	3%	0%

Table 2.3 JINNY : I-PERSONA AND BODY : breakdown into participant roles : Adulthood

	I-PERSONA	BODY
ACTOR (middle and effective)	30%	10%

GOAL	2%	2%
MEDIUM (middle and effective)	1%	3%
INSTIGATOR	1%	1%

Table 2.4 JINNY :I-PERSONA AND BODY : breakdown into participant roles : Old age

	I-PERSONA	BODY
ACTOR (middle and effective)	38%	0%
GOAL	3%	6%
MEDIUM (middle and effective)	1%	0%
INSTIGATOR	1%	0%

Table 3.1 RHODA : distribution of transitive and ergative construals

	TRANSITIVE	ERGATIVE
CHILDHOOD	79%	21%
ADULTHOOD	75%	25%
OLD AGE	82%	18%

Table 3.2 RHODA AND OTHERS : breakdown into participant roles : Childhood

	RHODA	OTHERS
ACTOR (middle and effective)	23%	21%
GOAL	3%	0%
MEDIUM (middle and effective)	3%	1%
INSTIGATOR	6%	3%

Table 3.3 RHODA AND OTHERS : breakdown into participant roles : Adulthood

	RHODA	OTHERS
ACTOR (middle and effective)	23%	28%
GOAL	16%	3%

MEDIUM (middle and effective)	1%	0%
INSTIGATOR	6%	0%

Table 3.4 RHODA AND OTHERS : breakdown into particpant roles : Old age

	RHODA	OTHERS
ACTOR (middle and effective)	38%	15%
GOAL	5%	1%
MEDIUM (middle and effective)	2%	0%
INSTIGATOR	6%	1%