



WORD FORMATION AND TRANSITIVITY STRUCTURES IN THE REPRESENTATION OF SELF-HARM IN A LITTLE LIFE

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Abstract

This study, discusses how language is used to represent acts of self-harm in Hanya Yanagihara's novel *A Little Life*. The research focuses on two main points: (1) the types of word formation used to create vocabulary related to self-harm, and (2) how this vocabulary is manifested in transitivity structures that describe the experience of self-harm in the narrative. The purpose of this study is to identify the morphological processes that emerge and analyze how these processes are structured within the framework of transitivity so as to present complex dimensions of meaning. The research method used is qualitative-descriptive, referring to the word formation theories of Yule (2010) and Carstairs-McCarthy, as well as the transitivity theory of Thompson (2014) within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics. The research data are taken from 185 clauses in the novel that explicitly contain descriptions of self-harm. The results of the study show two main findings. First, in terms of word formation, six of the ten categories proposed by Yule were found, namely derivation (40 findings), borrowing (22), compounding with (17), conversion with two, abbreviation one finding, and multiple processes with three finding with a total of 87 words. Second, in terms of transitivity, all types of processes are found, with a dominance of material processes (85 clauses), followed by mental processes (45), relational processes (34), verbal processes (10), behavioral processes nine, and existential processes two. Overall, this study concludes that Morphological processes provide a rich vocabulary, while transitivity structures place this vocabulary within a layered narrative framework.

Keyword : self-harm, SFL, transitivity, word formation

1. Introduction

As a universal medium of communication, language plays a central role in self-expression and social interaction. The degree of attachment and the quality of human relationships are heavily dependent on the use of language itself (Bloomfield et al., 1974:5). In literary works, language has a powerful and essential function in conveying suffering, emotional wounds, and trauma that are often difficult to articulate directly. Through sentence structure, word choice, and narrative form, authors communicate the deepest experiences of their characters, including painful moments such as trauma and acts of self-harm.

The phenomenon of self-harm has become increasingly relevant to discuss, not only in the context of mental health but also in cultural and literary representation. According to a research by Widyawati and

Kurniawan (2021), all 227 respondents aged 18–25 who were active social media users in Indonesia had engaged in self-harm. Ho, K. (2019), through a YouGov survey, also report that 45% of individuals aged 18–24 in Indonesia had deliberately self-harmed, making this age group the highest in terms of prevalence. In literature, self-harm is not only a narrative element but also symbolizes deeper psychological wounds, often conveyed through layered and complex narratives.

One literary work that portrays psychological trauma in depth is *A Little Life* (2015) by Hanya Yanagihara. The main character, Jude St. Francis, is a survivor of childhood sexual and physical abuse who suffers long-term trauma. One of Jude's primary expressions of trauma is self-harm, such as cutting himself, hiding his wounds, burning his skin, and degrading himself.



However, these acts are not always narrated explicitly; often, the language is used to obscure, disguise, or soften the depiction of such experiences.

To understand how self-harm is constructed in narratives, linguistic approaches can make an important contribution. One relevant approach is morphological analysis, particularly on word formation processes. Yule (2010) identifies various types of word formation in English, such as derivation, compounding, blending, conversion, and others. These processes not only form new vocabulary, but also create certain shades of meaning. In this novel, words such as worthless, hopelessness, and self-harm are the result of morphological processes that indirectly reinforce the central theme of trauma and suffering. Therefore, word formation analysis can reveal how word structures convey the emotional weight hidden in the narrative. However, analysis at the word level is not enough. The words appear in sentence structures that form the overall meaning. For this reason, this study also uses the Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) framework, specifically the transitivity theory developed by Halliday (2014) and further explained by Thompson (2014).

Transitivity, as part of the ideational metafunction in SFL, serves as a tool to analyze how actions, experiences, and states are encoded in language. This analysis reveals the types of processes (material, mental, relational, etc.), the participants involved (Actor, Goal, Senser, etc.), and accompanying circumstances. Through this approach, researchers can identify how psychological trauma is linguistically constructed.

This study is significant because it bridges the fields of morphology, functional grammar self-harm is represented linguistically. The novelty of this study lies in its dual approach: (1) analyzing trauma-related vocabulary through word formation processes, and (2) analyzing how transitivity structure encode acts of self-harm. By focusing on self-harm related vocabulary

and sentence structures in *A Little Life*, this study contributes to linguistic studies in contemporary literary texts.

To guide this research, the study sets out specific problems to be examined. These problems focus on how self-harm is represented linguistically in *A Little Life* by Hanya Yanagihara. The problems of the study are:

1. What types of word formation are used in the novel *A Little Life* to construct words that represent self-harm?
2. How are the self-harm-related word forms realized within transitivity structures?

2. Literature Review

Several previous studies support the application of this integrated linguistic approach. Sawirman and Ridhwani (2020) analyze transitivity patterns in suicide notes and found that material, mental, and relational processes dominate the expression of emotional suffering, illustrating how trauma can be linguistically revealed. Namboodiripad (2025), in an analysis of the novel *A Little Life* using trauma theory, concludes that the life story of Jude St. Francis explicitly represents psychological trauma, including violent childhood experiences and self-harm, making this novel an appropriate subject for linguistic analysis of trauma. Ardiel et al. (2025) show the lexicon used in self-harming discourse among adolescents and identified recurring trauma-related terms such as “cutting,” “overdose,” and “barcode,” showing that such vocabulary carries strong ideological and social meanings.

Morphology and Word Formation

In linguistics, morphology is the branch of science that studies the internal structure of words and how words are formed from the smallest meaningful units called morphemes. The term morphology comes from the Greek *morph-* (‘form’) and *-logy* (‘study’), and was first used by August Schleicher in 1859 (Handoko, 2019). O’Grady (in Handoko, 2019:6) calls morphology as the study of word structure



and its system of meaning-forming rules and categories. Haspelmath and Sims (2013:41) add that morphology systematically studies variations in word form and structure, including the combination of morphemes in forming new words.

One of the main aspects of morphology is word formation, which is the process of creating new vocabulary from basic forms or combinations of existing linguistic elements. Word formation is a mechanism that not only enriches the vocabulary of a language, but also reflects the social, cultural and psychological dynamics of the language-using community. In a literary context, forms of word formation can be used by writers to build emotional narratives, describe inner experiences, or create certain stylistic effects.

To guide the analysis in this study, Yule's (2010) and Carstairs-McCarthy's (2002) Word Formation theory is used. Yule classifies ten word formation processes: coinage, create of new words that are created completely from nothing. Borrowing, the process of forming words in English by taking words from other languages. Compounding, the process of combining two independent words into one new word. Blending, blends are new words formed by combining two different words and then removing some of the sounds or letters from one or both of the original words. Clipping, by cutting long parts of words. Backformation, the process of word formation by cutting off the end of an existing word, usually to create a verb from a noun. Conversion, the process of changing the function or class of a word (e.g., from a noun to a verb) without changing its form. Acronym, a new word formed from the initial letters of several words. Derivation, process of forming a new word by adding "small pieces" (called affixes) to the base word, and multiple processes more than one-word formation process occurs at once in the formation of a new word. A word can take several stages, such as borrowing, truncation, conversion, or addition of affixes in one sequence. Carstairs-McCarthy

strengthens the classification by detailing the structure of derivatives and compound words in English. This combination of theories allows morphological analysis in literary texts to be carried out systematically and in depth, especially in revealing the meaning implied in the choice of words used by the writer.

Transitivity in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Transitivity is a main part of the ideational metafunction in SFL theory. Halliday emphasizes that language is a social semiotics, that is, a set of choices used by speakers or writers to construct, negotiate, and represent social reality through interaction (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014:162). According to Muhammad (2024), SFL considers language as a social semiotic system, where every grammatical choice reflects the values, position and psychological condition of the speaker. Accordingly, in narratives containing trauma or self-harm, transitivity structures provide deep insights into how suffering is communicated implicitly or explicitly.

Transitivity in SFL theory not only explains syntactic structure, but also becomes a tool to understand how human experience is constructed through language. Transitivity, is used to explain how human experiences, whether real events, thoughts, or states, are represented in the form of clauses. This system not only explains the relationship between subject and predicate, but also thoroughly describes who is involved in an action, the type of action performed, and under what conditions the action takes place. According to Thompson (2014), transitivity is a linguistic system that allows speakers to convey different types of experiences through sentence structure. Clauses are considered units of experience, and each clause contains a certain type of process, participants involved in the process, and additional information in the form of circumstances. He classifies the transitivity system into two main interconnected elements, first types



processes and participants, and the second circumstances. These elements work together to form a representation of experience in the clause structure.

Process types are at the center of transitivity as they determine how an event or experience is categorized linguistically. It is divided into six types, but three of them are the main categories, namely: material, mental, and relational. Participants, on the other hand, are the elements in the clause that are directly involved in the process. The type of participant differs depending on the type of process used. Thompson (2014) states that the transitivity system not only shows the type of action but also reveals the social and psychological roles of the participants in the action.

Six types of transitivity processes according to Thompson (2014) are, Material processes, describe real actions or events that are physical. The main participants in this process are the Actor, which is the doer of the action, and the Goal, which is the target of the action. Mental process, relates to inner or internal activities, such as thinking, feeling, and perceiving. The main participants are the Sayer, which is the individual who experiences mental activity, and the Phenomenon, which is what is felt, thought, or seen. Relational process, one of the three main processes in the transitivity system, and serves to establish meaning relationships between entities in a clause. Thompson divides relational processes into three main subcategories: attributive, that the main participants are Carrier, which is the subject that is subject to the attribute, as well as Attribute, which is the quality that is attributed to the subject. Identifying process, with main participants are Identified and Identifier, and the last, possessive process, the participants involved are Possessor and Possessed, linked by processes such as has, own, or belong to. The fourth is Verbal process, a type of process in the transitivity system that deals with the activity of communicating or conveying information. The main participants in this process consist of Sayer, Receiver, Verbiage, and sometimes Target. Behavioral processes, are

processes that bridge between physical (material) processes and mental processes. The main participants in a behavioral process are the Behavior (the actor, usually human) and in some cases, there may be another apparent participant this is the Behaviour, which is not a real participant but merely adds specification to the process the thing that is the focus or object of attention). Existential process, is used to express the existence or non-existence of something. The main participant in the existential process is Existent (something that is stated to exist), and can be complemented by Circumstance, such as a description of place or time.

Circumstances are elements in a clause that provide additional information about the process that is happening. Although optional, circumstances are very helpful in clarifying the context and setting of a process. This element is usually realized in the form of prepositional phrases or adverbial groups. The two most common categories are place and time, which can be seen as nodes (such as *in 1937, at Trumpington*) or lines, which are extent in terms of time duration (*from time to time*) and distance (*for another few miles*). Another category that often appears is manner, which answers the question *How?* This includes quality (*such as expertly*), means (*such as with string*), comparison (*like a light*), and degree (*100 per cent*). Circumstances expand the information in the clause without changing the underlying structure. In literary texts, the presence or absence of circumstances can also provide important cues about trauma, information concealment, or the emotional framing of an action.

3. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with an analytical descriptive method. This approach is chosen because it is by the main objective of this study, which is to reveal the meaning and representation of self-harm of the characters through linguistic analysis. As stated by Pahleviannur et al. (2022), qualitative research is a procedure that



produces descriptive data in the form of speech or writing that is analyzed contextually and holistically, based on the researcher's point of view. Two main theories are used integratively in the analysis, namely the word formation theories of Yule (2010) and Carstairs-McCarthy (2002) to explain the morphological process of word formation in the text and the theory of transitivity within the Systemic Functional Linguistics by Thompson (2014) to explain transitivity processes.

The data in this study consists of two main forms. First, data in the form of English words that undergo word formation processes, which are semantically and contextually related to the experience of acts of self-harm. Second, data in the form of linguistic units, such as clauses or sentences that contain these words and represent self-harm, either explicitly or implicitly. The main source of data is *A Little Life* a novel written by Hanya Yanagihara published in 2015, with 750 pages. This novel is chosen because it presents a complex narrative of self-harm through the main character, Jude St. Francis. The focus of data collection includes all sections of the novel that contain linguistic representations of self-harm.

The data was collected from the text of the novel by Reading the *A Little Life* carefully in its entirety, paying special attention to passages that describe or imply the protagonist's repeated acts of self-harm. Identifying narrative excerpts (descriptive passages) that depict or suggest self-harming behavior. Dialogues between characters were excluded to maintain focus on the author's narrative style and lexical choices. Extracting sentences and clauses that explicitly or implicitly contained linguistic markers of self-harm. These clauses were considered as the primary data of the study. Documenting and grouping according to their potential to be analyzed within the transitivity framework. This step ensured that each clause could be examined based on process types, participants, and circumstances. Among these clauses, the

researcher focused on those containing lexical items that demonstrate word formation processes, such as derivation, compounding, borrowing, or conversion. Finally, the data were compiled, numbered, and organized into tables, preparing them for systematic analysis.

The data in this study are analyzed using a qualitative-descriptive approach. Since the objective of the study is to analyze how self-harm is represented linguistically in the novel, the analysis proceeded of the data are, selecting narrative clauses that explicitly or implicitly portray self-harming behavior by the main character. Analysing clauses using SFL, particularly the transitivity system proposed by Halliday (2014) and explained by Thompson (2014). In this step, the process types (material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, existential) were identified, along with participants (such as Actor, Goal, Senser, Carrier, Sayer) and circumstances, to reveal how the act of self-harm is structured linguistically. Examining the same clauses using word formation theory (Yule, 2010; Carstairs-McCarthy, 2002). Lexical items within the clauses were classified according to their word formation processes, such as derivation, compounding, borrowing, conversion, acronym, and multiple processes. Grouping words formation by type to show the distribution and dominance of each process in the data. Comparing and interpret the findings from both to explain how word formation provides the lexical resources, while transitivity shows the structural realization of self-harm in the narrative.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Result

This study identifies word formation and transitivity representing the issue of self-harm. From the ten types of word formation proposed by Yule (2010), six types were found in the data, they are derivation, borrowing, compounding, conversion, blending, clipping, abbreviation, and multiple processes. The second aspect is transitivity. Based on the



framework described by Thompson (2014), all six types of transitivity processes were

found in the data.

Table 1. Distribution of Word Formation and Transitivity Findings

Aspects of Analysis	Categories	Number of findings and dominant Percentage	
Word Formation	Derivation	40	46%
	Borrowing	22	25.3%
	Compounding	17	19.59%
	Conversion	2	2.30%
	Abbreviation	1	1.15%
	Multiple Processes	3	3.45%
Total		87	100%
Transitivity	Material Process	85	45.95%
	Mental Process	45	24.32%
	Relational Process	34	18.38%
	Verbal Process	10	5.41%
	Behavioral Process	9	4.86%
	Existential Process	2	1.08%
Total		185	100%

These findings indicate that morphological processes play an important role in enriching linguistic representations related to self-harm. Of the six types, derivation was the most dominant with 49 findings, followed by borrowing with 22, compounding with 17, conversion with two, abbreviation one finding, and multiple processes with three finding. Overall, there were 87 words formed through word formation processes.

The distribution of findings shows the dominance of material processes with 85 clauses, followed by mental processes with 45 clauses, relational processes with 35 clauses, verbal processes with 10 clauses, behavioral processes with 9 clauses, and existential processes with the fewest, only one clause. These results confirm that the representation of self-harm in the novel is not only manifested through physical (material) actions, but also through mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential dimensions that complement the overall picture of the characters experiences.

4.1.1 Word formation in self-harm related clauses

The Derivation is the most productive process in word formation, which involves adding affixes to the base form to produce new meanings. Out of 40 total occurrences, three are analyzed in detail to illustrate how derivational affixes modify base forms to create new meanings associated with emotional and psychological pain.

In the data, the word painful in the clause *You have to tell me when it's painful, Jude* (p. 144) the process type can be identified as verbal, (from pain + suffix *-ful*) describes pain that is both emotional and physical. This word expands the meaning of pain to a condition that is intensely attached to the character's experience. Emptiness in the clause *he feels the old, comforting emptiness settle inside him* (p. 467) represents a mental process (from empty + *-ness*) marks an abstract emotional condition, where emptiness is personified as something that is experienced in real life. Meanwhile, *amputation* in the clause *Andy recommends—he strongly recommends—amputation* (p. 623) that includes a material process, (from amputate + *-ion*) presents a medical dimension, marking the extreme consequences of Jude's injuries.



Borrowing is the second most dominant type of word formation after derivation. From total of 22 data were identified, four representative examples are discussed in detail to illustrate how borrowed words are used to express concepts of pain, emotion, and self-harm actions. From the data found, borrowing words are used to refer to medical phenomena or the physical consequences of self-harm behavior. For example, razor is a borrowing word from Old French *razor* in the clause *...he is trying to find the razor* (p. 549). The clause contains a material process, in which is *razor* functions as a noun in English, representing a concrete tool used to self-harm. Meanwhile, “wound,” in the clause *Six months ago, they had managed to get the wound under control...* (p. 147) represents a material process, borrowed from the Germanic “*wundw*,” “suicide,” derived from the Latin “*suicidium*,” and the word “fatal,” in the clause *It’s not fatal* (p. 374) represents a relational process, borrowed from the Latin “*fatalis*,” identify the most extreme consequences of such actions.

Compounding is the most common after borrowing, multiple processes, conversion, and abbreviation with one founding. Sample data for each type of process is described as below. Compounding process, In the data, the prefix *self-* is combined with other words to indicate agency and the direction of the action back to the doer. The word *self-inflicted* in the clause *Bandaging each other’s self-inflicted cuts* (p. 512) the process type can be identified as relational, which is used to describe the wounds that Jude and William deliberately inflicted on their own body. This emphasizes that the act of self-harm is not merely a physical wound, but the result of a reflexive decision that originated from himself. Multiple proces, the form *self-destructiveness* in the clause *Your utter refusal ... is a pathological case of self-destructiveness* (p. 141) represents a relational process marks the extreme condition experienced by the character, combining the agency of the *self* with

destructive traits, then abstracting it into a state through *-ness*. Conversion, In the data, the word *bandage*, which was originally a noun, changes to a verb in the clause *But you need to bandage them* (p. 512) represents a material process, so that this word functions to directly represent the action of treating wounds. This change in function shows that the act of healing wounds is as important as the physical existence of the bandage itself, and abbreviation, Abbreviation are new words formed by abbreviating several words. In the data, OR in the clause *Paging Dr. Nesarian, Dr. Nesarian to OR Three* (p. 236). The clause contains a verbal process, is an abbreviation for Operating Room, a medical term that appears in the clause “*Paging Dr. Nesarian, Dr. Nesarian to OR Three*.” This word marks the institutional context surrounding Jude’s experience, where self-harm is not only a personal event but also has implications for formal medical care.

4.1.2 Transitivity in self-harm related clauses

Transitivity analysis shows that the phenomenon of self-harm is represented through all six types of processes in the Functional Linguistic Systemic framework, with a predominance of *material processes*. These findings show that the characters’ experiences are primarily described as a series of concrete physical actions, such as hurting or caring for themselves.

In the data *Jude cut himself*. (p. 72), “*I burned myself*,” *Jude says*. (p. 545), *Jude’s arm had grown a mouth and was vomiting blood...* (p. 69), *Bandaging each other’s self-inflicted cuts*. (p. 512), *He is cutting himself as much as he had when he was with Caleb*. (p. 507). The act of self-harm is directly indicated by the verbs *cut*, *burned*, *bandaging*, and *cutting*. The actor in a material clause is usually the entity performing the action, and in this data, the actor is almost always Jude who hurts himself (*cut himself*, *burned himself*, *cutting himself*). This pattern represents the body as the main arena of suffering, where self-harm



is treated as something repetitive and reflexive. In other words, material processes present self-harm not as an abstraction, but as a brutal physical reality.

Mental processes, in the data *He would watch as Andy dressed the wound.* (p. 144), *He knew Jude would keep cutting himself.* (p. 594), *"I've tortured myself about this."* (p. 345), *He knows it will become infected.* (p. 531), it can be seen that *know/knew* (cognition), *watch* (perception), and *tortured* (affection). The use of mental processes shows the subject's perspective in understanding experiences. This application is shown in Jude, who not only physically harms himself but also experiences mental suffering in the form of full awareness of the consequences of his actions *he knew Jude would keep cutting himself* and guilt *I've tortured myself*. Thus, mental processes reveal the psychological dimension of self-harm, namely how physical actions impact consciousness, emotions, and inner pain.

In data *The person he loved was sick.* (p. 594), *Seeing him was a kind of torture.* (p. 396), *"The issue is you hurting yourself."* (p. 508), *"A blood infection is serious."* (p. 236), *How inhuman he was.* (p. 398), Relational process is divided into two: attributive (assigning a quality to something, e.g., *"Jude is sick"*) and identifying (stating similarity or role, e.g., *"The issue is you hurting yourself"*). The Process is also often used to construct identity. In this data, self-harm is treated as a condition inherent to the character: *was sick, was inhuman, was a kind of torture*. These clauses not only describe, but also attach the status of sick and damaged to Jude, reinforcing the representation that self-harm is not just a temporary act, but part of the character's identity and existence.

Verbal process found in data *Andy recommends—he strongly recommends—amputation.* (p. 623), *He yells: "Don't you dare call me crazy..."* (p. 532), *"You're lying," Andy repeats.* (p. 531), *Andy would say, 'Or you'll be sick.'* (p. 144). In this data, self-harm becomes a topic of negotiation and conflict through conversation: Andy gives medical

instructions (*recommends amputation*), Jude refuses angrily (*yells*), and the conversation continues with claims and denials (*you're lying*). This verbal process shows that self-harm is not only a personal experience, but also a social issue that is debated, negotiated, and even imposed by others.

Behavioral processes in data *He screamed and screamed.* (p. 154), *Quickly practicing his laugh.* (p. 547), *He cries out.* (p. 531), *His breathing slows.* (p. 467), *They had stayed up so late...* (p. 397), are a category that lies between the material and the mental, as well as processes that reflect physical or psychological activities that are not entirely actions (material) and not entirely mental. In this data, *screaming, crying out, slowing breathing, and practicing his laugh* are bodily expressions that imply inner suffering. In other words, behavioral processes show the body as a reflection of emotions: fear, pain, or attempts to cover up inner wounds. Thus, this category serves to reveal the emotional impact of self-harm that is not always expressed verbally.

In this data *The suppuration, the sick, fishy scent, the little gash...* (p. 143) existential process is found. the presence of wounds, *the suppuration, the sick, fishy scent, and the little gash*, is treated as physical evidence of self-harm. This representation shows that Jude's suffering is not only psychological or social, but also manifests in the form of undeniable physical wounds.

4.2 Discussion

The linguistic constructions that appear in show how word formation and the transitivity system become intertwined in shaping representations of self-harm, both as a physical reality and an emotional narrative. These linguistic elements are not just mechanical grammatical choices, but reflections of Jude's broken identity and the tension between pain, need for control, and the desire to survive that colours his inner life.

In the clause *"He feels the old, comforting emptiness settle inside him,"* (p.



467) the derivation emptiness (from *empty* + *-ness*) describes the emotional void Jude feels. Through the process of derivation, the adjective becomes an abstract noun, transforming a quality into a state of being. In the mental process of feels, this emptiness appears as something real, even described as something “comforting.” This choice of language reflects Jude's dependence on numbness as a survival mechanism. The comfort he finds in emptiness shows that the act of self-harm in this novel is not only a form of escape from pain, but also an attempt to return to something familiar where emotional emptiness provides a fake sense of security.

Likewise, in the sentence “*Andy recommends—he strongly recommends—amputation,*” (p. 623) the derivative noun amputation (from *amputate* + *-ion*) brings medical discourse into Jude's suffering. Through the verbal process of recommending, language becomes a means of creating clinical distance, as opposed to the physical suffering experienced by Jude. The use of the word amputation makes the act of self-harm seem like merely medical advice, rather than an emotional crisis, reflecting how society, through figures such as Andy, attempts to rationalize something that is essentially very personal and irrational. Here, the processes of derivation and transitivity combine to reveal the tension between Jude's physical trauma and the institutional language that attempts to contain it.

Compound words such as self-deceptions, self-protection, and self-hatred further emphasize how the novel constructs Jude's fragmented self-awareness. In the clause “*His own self-deceptions were forms of self-protection,*” (p. 593) the relational process indicates an equivalence between the two internal concepts. Compound forms with the prefix *self-* show that Jude's pain and defense mechanisms originate from himself. The language here frames self-harm not as external violence, but as an internal dialogue a psychological negotiation between denial and self-defense.

In the sentence “*Your utter refusal ... is a pathological case of self-destructiveness,*” (p. 141) the word self-destructiveness is a combination of a compound process (*self-* + *destructive*) and derivation (*-ness*), resulting in a psychological term that is dense with meaning. Through the relational process is, this clause defines self-destructiveness as an internalized trait, not merely an action. Linguistically, this frames Jude's identity through a pathological lens showing how trauma has become so ingrained in him that destruction is part of his identity.

The clause “*Jude's arm had grown a mouth and was vomiting blood*” (p. 69) shows how derivation (*vomit* + *-ing*) combines with a material process to bring the wound to life metaphorically. This image blurs the line between body and language, showing Jude's pain as something alive, out of control, and almost separate from him. Through linguistic constructions like this, the narrative externalizes psychological suffering into bodily horror showing how trauma seems to have a life of its own in Jude's consciousness.

In the sentence “*The mortifications and sadnesses of daily life,*” (p. 237) the plural forms of mortifications and sadnesses indicate recurring emotional suffering. The existential process in this clause shows that these circumstances simply “are” they are part of Jude's daily life. Through derivation, emotions are transformed into objects, turning feelings that should be temporary into permanent conditions. This choice of language emphasizes that self-harm, in this novel, is not a momentary act, but rather a continuous existential burden that shapes the way Jude views the world.

Lastly, in the sentence “*The suppuration, the sick, fishy scent, the little gash...*” (p. 143), the borrowed term suppuration (from the Latin suppuration) adds a precise medical nuance. Its use in an existential structure places Jude's suffering in a pathological realm, where the decay of the body becomes evidence of his inner struggle. This medical language contrasts with the personal pain described,



emphasizing how Jude's body becomes both subject and symbol—an archive of trauma revealed through the vocabulary of disease and damage.

5. Conclusion

This study analyses how linguistic elements, particularly word formation and transitivity structures, are used to represent the experience of self-harm in narrative and dialogue excerpts relating to self-harm from Hanya Yanagihara's. The findings are analyzed to answer the problem formulation that has been set at the beginning of this study.

Six types of word formation were found in the data: derivation, borrowing, compounding, conversion, acronym, and multiple processes. Derivation was the most dominant type (40 instances), followed by borrowing (22), compounding (17), conversion (2), while abbreviation one finding, and multiple processes three finding. These processes provided the linguistic resources to represent tools (*razor, bandage*), wounds (*cutting, wound*), conditions (*emptiness, painful*), and psychological states (*self-hatred, self-discipline, self-destructiveness*). Thus, word formation enriches the vocabulary used to describe both the physical and emotional aspects of self-harm. Derivation is the most dominant which accounts for 45.98% of the total findings. This indicates that the formation of new words through affixation is highly used to express emotional and psychological states related to self-harm.

Answering the second problem, Transitivity analysis shows that self-harm-related words are realized in six types of processes: material (87 clauses), mental (45), relational (34), verbal (10), behavioral (9), and existential (2). The material process is the most dominant, with 45.95% of the total findings representing self-harm as a tangible physical act. However, mental and relational processes reveal psychological and identity dimensions, while verbal, behavioral, and existential processes show their roles in communication, bodily expression, and lived reality. The

integration between word formation and transitivity shows that morphology provides lexical items, while transitivity places them in clauses to represent self-harm as both a physical act and a psychological experience.

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