

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee is widely recognized as an important work of American literature that addresses social issues such as racial injustice, morality, and equality. Since its publication in 1960, the novel has received significant academic attention and won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1961 Johnson (2011). The story centers on Atticus Finch, a lawyer who defends Tom Robinson, a Black man falsely accused of rape. Through his role as a defense attorney and father, Atticus demonstrates moral courage and professional integrity despite strong social prejudice Shackelford (1996). His character plays an important role in conveying the novel's central themes of justice, morality, and ethical responsibility.

According to Booth (1983), characters in literary works function as carriers of moral and thematic meaning, allowing readers to understand the author's perspective through their actions and decisions. In the case of Atticus Finch, his actions, dialogue, and personal values reflect principles of justice, empathy, and fairness. Literary scholars have noted that Atticus serves as a moral guide whose character helps readers interpret the novel's broader themes of justice and human dignity Malloy (2014). Therefore, analyzing Atticus Finch's characterization is important for understanding how the novel constructs its central themes and moral perspective.

Characterization is a key element in literary works because it enables authors to communicate themes and values through characters' actions and dialogue. According to Abrams (1999), characterization is the process by which authors present and develop characters to shape readers' understanding of their personalities and moral qualities. Atticus Finch's characterization is particularly significant because his actions, speech, and decisions influence how readers interpret the novel's moral perspective. As a central character, Atticus represents justice and ethical principles, making his characterization an important subject for analysis.

While many studies have examined Atticus Finch from literary and moral perspectives, fewer studies have analyzed how language contributes to constructing his character. Language plays an important role in representing actions, thoughts, and relationships in literary texts. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), language functions as a system for representing human experience and constructing meaning. One aspect of this system is transitivity, which can be used to examine how characters are represented through linguistic processes. By analyzing the linguistic patterns in Atticus Finch's dialogue and actions, it is possible to understand how language contributes to constructing his character traits.

This study focuses on analyzing the characterization of Atticus Finch using transitivity analysis because of his central role in representing justice and moral values in the novel. His courtroom dialogue and interactions with other characters provide relevant linguistic data for analysis. This study contributes to literary and

linguistic research by providing a systematic analysis of how language constructs characterization. Furthermore, it supports the view that linguistic analysis can provide deeper insight into how characters are represented and how literary meaning is constructed through language.

1.2 Research Problems

This section of the study presents the research problems that guide the focus and direction of the study. The problems are formulated in the form of question sentences to clearly identify the aspects of Atticus Finch's characterization examined through transitivity analysis in the courtroom scenes of *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. The research problems occurred are listed as follows:

1. What types of transitivity processes (material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential) are most frequently associated with Atticus Finch sampled from the courtroom scenes in Transitivity Analysis of Atticus Finch Characterization in Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* 3rd edition novel?
2. How do these transitivity processes contribute to the depiction of Atticus Finch's character in terms of his morality, intellect, and social role?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This part of the study outlines the objectives of the study, which are derived from the research problems and define the intended outcomes of the analysis. These objectives guide the systematic examination of transitivity processes to reveal how Atticus Finch's characterization is constructed in the courtroom scenes

of *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Identify and classify the transitivity processes used in Atticus Finch's dialogues and narrative descriptions in courtroom scenes (the types of processes) associated with Atticus Finch's speech and actions).
2. Analyze how these transitivity processes depict and reflect his characterization in the scope of his moral values, intellect, and social role within the novel.

1.4 Previous Studies

Although many studies have examined Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, none have analyzed how his character is constructed using Halliday's transitivity system. Most research focuses on his ethics, morality, speech, and historical significance, but does not explore how grammatical choices in the novel shape his actions, identity, and relationships. This study aims to fill that gap by using transitivity analysis to examine the processes, participants, and circumstances that define Atticus's role in the story.

Several studies have examined Atticus Finch's characterization from a range of disciplinary perspectives. From a social and cultural viewpoint, Davis (2013), in *Racial Tensions and Atticus Finch's Defense of Tom Robinson*, analyzes the racial dynamics in Maycomb and highlights how Atticus's defense underscores the novel's engagement with racial injustice. Lee (2016), in *Atticus Finch and the Performance of Masculinity*, explores how Finch's character both challenges and reinforces traditional masculine norms. Singh (2018) offers a postcolonial critique

in *Rereading Atticus Finch: A Postcolonial Perspective*, examining how his character either perpetuates or disrupts racial hierarchies. Similarly, Chen (2019), in *The Portrayal of Racial Tensions in To Kill a Mockingbird*, focuses on Finch's role in addressing racial divisions within the community.

From psychological and philosophical perspectives, Hernandez (2015), in *The Characterization of Atticus Finch: A Psychological Perspective*, applies psychological theory to analyze his motivations, values, and interpersonal relationships. Johnson (2011), in *Atticus Finch and the Ethics of Empathy*, explores how Finch's moral decisions are shaped by his deep sense of empathy and understanding toward others.

In educational and literary studies, Walker (2017), in *The Pedagogy of Atticus Finch: Teaching Moral Education*, investigates his parenting style as a model for teaching empathy, compassion, and critical thinking. C. Lee (2012), in *The Significance of Atticus Finch's Characterization in To Kill a Mockingbird*, examines his role as a moral compass in the novel and his influence on the community. Jones (2020), in *Atticus Finch as a Literary Icon*, highlights his enduring legacy in American literature and culture. Additionally, Patterson (2014), in *Atticus Finch as a Moral Exemplar*, analyzes the racial tensions in Maycomb and Atticus Finch's defense of Tom Robinson, highlighting the novel's exploration of racial injustice.

Even though previous research has explored Atticus's ethics, morality, speech, and cultural significance, no study has applied Halliday's transitivity system to examine how his character is built through different types of processes,

participants, and circumstances in the novel. This study will use transitivity analysis to provide a structured linguistic approach to understanding his role.

By analyzing different process types (material, relational, mental, verbal, behavioral, and existential), this study will uncover how Atticus is portrayed. Unlike past research, which focuses on themes and interpretations, this study will use linguistic analysis to examine how Atticus is represented in the novel's text. By applying transitivity analysis within the ideational metafunction, this research will provide a fresh, systematic perspective on how Harper Lee uses language to shape Atticus Finch's character.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on analyzing the characterization of Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* 3rd edition through the lens of transitivity analysis, a framework within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) proposed by M.A.K.Halliday. The research examines how the linguistic choices in the novel particularly processes, participants, and circumstances construct Atticus Finch's character.

This study is limited to selected dialogues and narrative descriptions involving Atticus Finch in the courtroom scenes of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The data are deliberately sampled to avoid repetitive representation of Abrams (1999) character traits and to maintain a focused analysis within a manageable writing length. The selection of data is based on relevance to his moral, intellectual, and social attributes as portrayed in the novel. The analysis does not extend to other

characters unless their interactions with Atticus significantly contribute to his characterization.