

## CHAPTER II

### THEORY AND METHOD

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), a linguistic theory developed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) that views language as a structured system for making meaning in social contexts. Within SFL, language is understood to serve three main metafunctions:

1. Ideational metafunction that represents human experience and constructs reality.
2. Interpersonal metafunction that manages social interactions, relationships, and attitudes.
3. Textual metafunction that organizes discourse and ensures textual coherence.

This research primarily focuses on the experiential mode that belongs to the ideational metafunction, which is realized through the transitivity system. Through transitivity analysis, this study aims to examine how Atticus Finch's characterization is constructed in *To Kill a Mockingbird* novel.

##### 2.1.1 Transitivity System

Halliday's transitivity system is a fundamental aspect of the ideational metafunction, as it represents how language encodes different types of actions, perceptions, and relations. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), transitivity consists of three main components; process types as the kind of

activity, thought, or state represented in a clause, participants as the entities involved in the process, and circumstances as additional contextual details (e.g., time, place, manner). Halliday classifies six process types, each of which plays a distinct role in representing different aspects of meaning:

#### **2.1.1.1 Material Processes**

Material processes are the prototypical expressions of doing or acting, where clauses denote physical activities or events that occur in the external world. These processes typically involve an *Actor*, the participant who performs the action, and often a *Goal*, the entity affected by the action. In some instances, additional roles such as *Recipient* (the one who receives the Goal) or *Scope* (the extent or range of the activity) may also be present. Material processes are classified into two main functional subtypes: *creative* and *transformative*. Creative processes bring something into existence (e.g., *She wrote a poem* or *She composed a song*), while transformative processes result in a change to an existing entity (e.g., *He painted the wall* or *He fixed the car*). Furthermore, material processes may be *transactional*, involving both Actor and Goal (e.g., *The child kicked the ball*), or *non-transactional*, involving only the Actor without affecting another participant (e.g., *She ran quickly*) Halliday and Matthiessen (2014).

#### **2.1.1.2 Mental Processes**

Mental processes relate to sensing and represent internalized experiences such as perception, cognition, emotion, and desire. These processes are concerned with how individuals experience the world mentally and emotionally, rather than through physical action. A mental process typically involves two key participants:

the *Senser*, who must be a conscious, feeling or thinking participant, and the *Phenomenon*, which refers to what is perceived, thought, desired, or felt. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) identify four subtypes of mental processes: *perceptive* processes (e.g., *He heard the noise*), which involve sensory perception; *cognitive* processes (e.g., *I believe her story*), which involve acts of thinking or knowing; *desiderative* processes (e.g., *She wants a new phone*), which express wants or wishes; and *emotive* processes (e.g., *They hate the weather*), which represent feelings or emotional responses. These processes are particularly valuable in literary analysis, as they reveal the internal states, motivations, and consciousness of characters, thereby offering insight into how subjectivity and psychological depth are constructed through language.

### **2.1.1.3 Relational Processes**

Relational processes express states of being, having, or identifying relationships between entities, and are central to clauses that define, describe, or locate participants within a particular context. These processes are broadly classified into two main subtypes: *attributive* and *identifying*. In attributive relational clauses, a *Carrier* is assigned an *Attribute*, expressing a quality or characteristic (e.g., *She is kind* or *She is intelligent*). In contrast, identifying relational clauses equate two entities, with one functioning as the *Token* and the other as the *Value*, thereby establishing identity, role, or classification (e.g., *Tom is the manager* or *Einstein was a scientist*). Both attributive and identifying processes can be further subcategorized into three functional types: *intensive* (A = B) (e.g., *Einstein was a scientist*), *possessive* (A has B) (e.g., *This book is hers*),

and *circumstantial* (A is at/in/on B) (e.g., *The meeting is on Wednesday*), depending on the kind of relationship being constructed. These variations allow relational processes to articulate a wide range of meanings related to description, ownership, and location Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). Their versatility makes them essential in transitivity, particularly in defining identities or assigning qualities in written texts.

#### **2.1.1.4 Behavioral Processes**

Behavioral processes represent a class of processes that occupy an intermediate space between material and mental processes, capturing physiological and psychological behaviors. These processes typically involve a single, conscious participant known as the *Behaver*, who is usually a human or animate entity performing the behavior. Behavioral processes are characterized by actions that are not overtly physical in the way material processes are, yet do not fully qualify as internalized mental acts either. They encompass both *voluntary* and *involuntary* actions that reflect or imply internal mental or emotional states. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) classify behavioral processes into several subtypes: *perceptive behaviors* such as “watch” or “listen” (e.g., *He watched silently*), *mental behaviors* like “ponder” (e.g., *She pondered the question*), *verbal-like behaviors* including “laugh” or “cry” (e.g., *They laughed loudly*), and *involuntary behaviors* such as “cough” or “yawn” (e.g., *The baby yawned*). In literary and narrative texts, behavioral processes are particularly valuable for depicting character reactions and subtle psychological shifts. They often serve as

indicators of a character's inner state, making them effective tools for enhancing character development and psychological realism.

#### **2.1.1.5 Verbal Processes**

Verbal processes denote acts of symbolic communication such as speaking, reporting, quoting, or other forms of verbal expression. These processes typically involve a *Sayer*, the participant responsible for the verbal act, and may include optional roles such as the *Receiver* (the one addressed), the *Verbiage* (the content or substance of what is said), and the *Target* (the entity affected by the act of saying). Verbal processes can be realized through direct speech as stated by Abrams (1999) (e.g., *He is an honest and principled man*), indirect speech (e.g., *His behavior matches his moral beliefs*), or more abstract communicative functions such as suggesting, announcing, or evaluating (e.g., *She insulted the waiter*). These processes are essential for expressing interaction and the exchange of information within discourse. In some cases, the verbal process also carries emotional or interpersonal implications, thereby serving both referential and attitudinal purposes in communication Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). By analyzing verbal processes, one can gain insights into how language constructs dialogue, reports knowledge, conveys authority, and shapes interpersonal relationships in both spoken and written texts.

#### **2.1.1.6 Existential Processes**

Existential processes are used to assert the existence, presence, or occurrence of something within a clause. These processes typically employ the dummy subject *there* and involve a single participant, the *Existent*, which refers to

the entity that is said to exist. Existential clauses often incorporate circumstantial elements, such as time or location, to situate the existence more precisely (e.g., *There was a loud noise in the hallway* or *There were many birds on the roof*) Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). These processes are frequently used in narrative texts to introduce new information, establish the setting, or shift the focus to a previously unmentioned element within the discourse. By doing so, existential clauses contribute significantly to the progression and development of narrative structures.

By analyzing the distribution and frequency of these process types in Atticus Finch's dialogues and descriptions, this study aims to determine how Harper Lee linguistically constructs his character's moral, intellectual, and ethical stance.

### **2.1.2 Characterization**

Characterization is a central concept in literary studies that refers to the way authors construct and present characters within a narrative. According to Abrams (1999), characterization is the process through which writers reveal characters' personalities, moral qualities, and psychological attributes through their actions, speech, thoughts, and relationships with others. Through this process, readers gain an understanding of characters' motivations, values, and narrative roles. Characters serve as key vehicles through which literary works communicate themes, conflicts, and moral perspectives.

This concept goes beyond simply describing a character's physical appearance. It also involves revealing how a character thinks, speaks, behaves,

feels, and relates to others. Through these aspects, readers gradually form an understanding of the character's personality and overall identity.

#### **2.1.2.1 Trait Classification Based on Abrams' Characterization Theory**

Abrams (1999) identifies two primary techniques of characterization. The first is direct characterization, often called the "telling" method. In this approach, the narrator openly states a character's qualities, such as labeling the character as brave, honest, or intelligent. The second technique is indirect characterization, or the "showing" method. Here, the author does not explicitly describe personality traits. Instead, readers must interpret the character's traits by observing patterns in speech, behavior, thoughts, emotional responses, and interactions with others. Abrams (1999) notes that contemporary novels frequently rely on indirect characterization, requiring readers to recognize consistent behavioral patterns in order to determine enduring traits.

Abrams (1999) also differentiates between flat and round characters. A flat character is defined mainly by one dominant trait and typically lacks complexity or development. In contrast, a round character possesses depth and displays multiple consistent qualities. Such a character reacts realistically across various situations. This study emphasizes indirect characterization because it allows for deeper personality analysis. It proposes that the combination of incisive, principled, and compassionate traits forms a complex and fully realized round character.

### **2.1.2.2 Incisive Trait**

An incisive trait describes a character's ongoing ability to think critically, analyze situations carefully, and make logical judgments. Within Abrams (1999) theory, intellectual qualities are primarily revealed through dialogue and internal reflection.

Importantly, the narrator does not need to explicitly state that a character is intelligent. Instead, intelligence is demonstrated through repeated examples of thoughtful communication and reasoned decision-making. When such patterns consistently appear across different circumstances, readers can reasonably conclude that incisiveness is a stable characteristic. In this way, the incisive trait represents the intellectual dimension of characterization, highlighting how the character interprets and understands a matter.

### **2.1.2.3 Principled Trait**

A principled trait refers to a character's consistent dedication to moral values and ethical standards. Abrams (1999) suggests that actions are one of the most effective ways to reveal personality. Readers determine a character's moral identity by observing choices made during moments of difficulty or pressure. A character can be described as principled when actions align consistently with stated moral beliefs and when those beliefs are maintained despite challenges.

Moral integrity is not demonstrated through a single virtuous act. Rather, it must be shown through repeated ethical decisions across different events. When a character continues to uphold the same standards even at personal cost, readers recognize a stable moral foundation. Thus, principled characterization reflects the

moral dimension of personality, emphasizing consistency between belief and behavior.

#### **2.1.2.4 Compassionate Trait**

A compassionate trait involves a character's ongoing expression of empathy, kindness, and genuine concern for others. Abrams (1999) highlights the importance of emotional responses and interpersonal relationships in revealing character. A person's reactions to the experiences of others often expose deeper aspects of their personality. A character may be considered compassionate when they consistently demonstrate care for those who suffer, provide assistance or protection, and respond with understanding in challenging situations.

Compassion does not become a defining trait through a single act of kindness. It must be demonstrated repeatedly across various contexts. When readers observe sustained patterns of empathy and supportive behavior, they can conclude that compassion forms part of the character's core identity. Therefore, compassionate characterization represents the emotional dimension of personality, illustrating how the character connects with others and responds to human hardship.

Similarly, Murphy (1972) explains that characterization can be conveyed through various techniques, including personal description, speech, thoughts, reactions, and interactions with other characters. Among these techniques, speech and actions are particularly significant because they provide direct and observable evidence of a character's personality and moral orientation. Dialogue allows readers to examine how characters express their beliefs, attitudes, and emotional

responses. Therefore, analyzing linguistic patterns in characters' speech offers a systematic and objective method for understanding how characterization is constructed in literary texts.

However, in order to examine characterization systematically and objectively, a linguistic framework is necessary. Systemic Functional Linguistics, particularly the transitivity system developed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), provides an effective analytical tool for examining how language represents experience and constructs character identity. By analyzing the process types associated with Atticus Finch, this study identifies how his character traits are linguistically constructed. This approach demonstrates that characterization is not only a literary concept but also a linguistic phenomenon that can be analyzed through patterns of meaning encoded in clauses.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition novel, the character of Atticus Finch is primarily constructed through his dialogue, actions, and interactions with other characters. His professional role as a lawyer and his personal role as a father are reflected in his courtroom arguments, moral explanations, and interpersonal communication. These linguistic representations reveal important aspects of his character, including his commitment to justice, empathy toward others, and strong moral principles.

## **2.2 Research Methodology**

This chapter explains the methods used in conducting this study. It describes the research design, data source, data collection technique, and data analysis technique applied in analyzing the data. Since this study focuses on examining

how the characterization of Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* novel is constructed through the transitivity system of Systemic Functional Linguistics, a qualitative descriptive approach was used. This chapter provides a clear explanation of how the data were collected and analyzed to answer the research questions.

### **2.2.1 Type of Research**

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach, which emphasizes the analysis of linguistic data in textual form. Such an approach is well-suited for examining how language constructs meaning within specific social and narrative contexts. As Dörnyei (2007) notes, qualitative research is particularly effective in linguistic studies because it enables a detailed and context-sensitive exploration of meaning, interpretation, and function.

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze the characterization of Atticus Finch through the transitivity system within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Creswell (2014) also stated that qualitative research is appropriate for examining linguistic and literary phenomena because it focuses on interpreting meaning and understanding how language functions in context rather than measuring numerical variables. This design allows the researcher to explore how linguistic features contribute to the construction of character identity in a literary text.

Descriptive qualitative research was used because the objective of this study is to describe and interpret how transitivity processes are used to construct Atticus Finch's characterization. According to Ary et al. (2010), qualitative descriptive

research is intended to analyze and interpret textual data systematically in order to understand patterns of meaning. In this study, the analysis focuses on identifying and interpreting process types and participants in clauses related to Atticus Finch.

This study adopts Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics framework, particularly the transitivity system, to examine how language represents experience and constructs meaning. Since characterization in literary texts is often revealed through a character's speech, actions, and thoughts, transitivity analysis provides a systematic linguistic approach to examine how these elements contribute to the construction of character identity.

Therefore, this qualitative descriptive design is suitable for achieving the objective of this study, which is to explain how Atticus Finch's characterization is constructed linguistically through transitivity processes in the novel.

### **2.2.2 Data and Data Source**

The primary data source of this study was the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* written by Harper Lee, originally published in 1960 and later republished in 1998. This novel was selected because it presents Atticus Finch as a central character whose dialogue, actions, and interactions play a crucial role in conveying the themes of justice, morality, and social responsibility.

The data specifically consisted of clauses containing Atticus Finch's dialogue and narrative descriptions involving him. These clauses include his speech in courtroom settings, conversations with other characters, and narrative descriptions of his actions, thoughts, and behaviors. These linguistic elements are

essential because they provide direct evidence of how his character is constructed within the narrative.

This study focused on selected clauses rather than the entire novel. This approach was used to ensure analytical focus and to avoid excessive repetition of similar linguistic patterns, while still providing sufficient data to identify meaningful transitivity patterns related to characterization.

### **2.2.3 Method of Data Collection**

The data were collected using a documentation technique, which is commonly used in qualitative literary and linguistic research. Documentation involves collecting and analyzing written materials as the primary source of data Ary et al. (2010). In this study, the written document analyzed was the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

The data collection process began with close and repeated reading of the novel to gain a comprehensive understanding of the narrative and Atticus Finch's role in the story. This step was important to ensure accurate identification of relevant linguistic data. During this process, I focused on sections where Atticus Finch appears as a speaker or is described in the narrative.

After identifying relevant sections, purposive sampling was used to select clauses that clearly represent Atticus Finch's speech, actions, thoughts, and interactions. Purposive sampling is appropriate when we want to select data based on specific research objectives and relevance Creswell (2014). Hence, this technique allowed the writer to focus on clauses that most effectively reflect Atticus Finch's characterization.

The selected clauses were then extracted and recorded in a structured data sheet. Each clause was documented along with its context and reference location in the novel. This process ensured that the data were organized systematically and could be analyzed accurately.

#### **2.2.4 Method of Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using the transitivity system within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, as proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). Transitivity analysis examines how language represents experience through process types, participants, and circumstances. Since this study focuses on characterization, transitivity analysis provides a systematic method for examining how the characterization of Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is constructed through language.

The analysis began by dividing the selected text into clauses, as the clause is the primary unit of analysis in transitivity. Each clause represents a unit of experiential meaning, making it suitable for examining how actions, thoughts, and relationships are expressed linguistically. This step ensured that each instance of Atticus Finch's speech, action, or experience could be analyzed accurately and systematically.

After identifying the clauses, each clause was analyzed to determine its transitivity structure. This involved identifying the process type used in the clause, the participants involved in the process, and any accompanying circumstances. The processes were classified into six types: material processes (representing physical actions), mental processes (representing thoughts, feelings, and

perceptions), relational processes (representing states of being and identification), behavioral processes (representing physiological and psychological behaviors), verbal processes (representing acts of communication), and existential processes (representing existence) Halliday and Matthiessen (2014).

Special attention was given to verbal processes, as they constitute the dominant process type in the data and serve as the primary linguistic resource for constructing Atticus Finch's characterization. In analyzing verbal processes, I first identified the participant roles, particularly the Sayer and the Verbiage. When Atticus Finch functioned as the Sayer, the analysis focused primarily on the Verbiage, which refers to the content of his speech. This is because the Verbiage contains the linguistic expressions that reflect his beliefs, reasoning, moral stance, and attitudes. Therefore, the Verbiage was examined closely to identify how Atticus Finch's traits are indirectly expressed through his spoken language.

This analytical focus is based on the principle that characterization in literary texts is often constructed indirectly through a character's speech rather than through explicit authorial description Abrams (1999), Murphy (1972). In the novel, Atticus Finch's traits are not always directly stated by the narrator, instead, they are revealed through what he says. As a result, the Verbiage functions as the primary indicator of his characterization, as it provides direct textual evidence of his intellectual reasoning, moral principles, and compassionate perspective. Even when Atticus Finch appears grammatically as the Sayer, it is the Verbiage that was analyzed to interpret his characterization, because it contains the meaningful content that reflects his personality and values.

Following the classification of all process types, I then examined patterns in the distribution and frequency of processes associated with Atticus Finch. This step was essential in identifying how different linguistic patterns contribute to the construction of his character. For example, verbal processes could highlight his role as a communicator and moral guide, material processes reflect his actions and responsibilities, mental processes reveal his internal thoughts and perceptions, and relational processes define his identity and personal qualities.

The results were then interpreted using characterization theory, which states that characters are revealed through their speech, actions, thoughts, and interactions with others Abrams (1999), Murphy (1972). By examining the linguistic patterns, particularly the Verbiage in verbal processes, I then identified how Atticus Finch's traits are constructed indirectly and directly through his language.

Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the overall patterns identified in the analysis. This process enable to explain how transitivity functions as a linguistic tool for constructing character identity and how Atticus Finch's characterization is represented through specific linguistic choices in the novel.