

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Language serves a very integral role in humans' lives. It serves as a fundamental resource for contriving and delivering meaning. Language's existence is an outcome of the social process, through continuous trade of meanings with others (Halliday, 1978). It is used and involved constantly in almost all of our day-to-day activities. Language, through grammatical selections, allows speakers and writers to shape reality and represent both exterior actions and internal states of mind. According to Halliday, language is one of semiotic systems that constitute a culture; one that is distinctive in that it also serves as an encoding system for many. Language itself consists of text, or discourse. Those are the ones that make up language, in exchange for meanings in various interpersonal circumstances. Semiotics is one of the tools to analyze language within a sociocultural context. Halliday (1978) argues that language is a social semiotic system due to meanings that are formed through social interaction and are influenced by the cultural context in which communication takes place. As a result, every language choice reflects speakers' perceptions and representations of their experiences, as well as what they want to convey to others.

One of the linguistics theories that systematically puts meaning-making into consideration is Systemic Functional Language (SFL). Halliday & Hasan

(1985) perceive language as a social semiotic system in which context and functional decisions shape meaning. According to SFL, the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions are all implemented simultaneously by language. Among all that, the one which focuses on how language represents human experience and reality is the ideational metafunction. It is mostly applied through transitivity systems, which look at how experiences are encoded through individuals, situations, and processes.

The transitivity system classifies processes into six categories: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential (Halliday & Matthiesen, 2014). Each process type represents a different way of construing experience. Material processes express physical actions and events, whereas mental processes represent inner experiences such as perception, cognition, affection, and desire. Since mental processes portray what individuals think, feel, perceive, and want, they provide valuable linguistic evidence for examining psychological orientation and personality in literary texts.

Scholars have long been interested in the connection between personality and language. Carl Jung (1921/1971) argues that the difference between introversion and extraversion is one of the basic personality differences. Introverts generally direct their attention to their inner world of ideas, feelings, and reflections, rather than toward external social interactions. From a language standpoint, this inward focus may be conveyed through the prominence of mental processes, which foreground inward consciousness over observable physical acts..

Therefore, transitivity analysis provides a systemic framework for investigating how personality traits are constructed through language.

Charlie, the main character in Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, is portrayed as a "wallflower," which is a term used to describe someone quiet, perceptive, and socially reclusive. This description of Charlie is particularly interesting because it challenges the conventional idea of how main characters are usually depicted. The researcher opts for this novel as the research object due to its characterization of the protagonist as a "wallflower," indicating a significant tendency towards introversion, likely manifested by the frequency of inward-focused transitivity processes, particularly mental processes. Because Charlie narrates much of the story through his own reflections, his language provides an appropriate corpus for examining how introversion is linguistically represented.

Previous studies on *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* have largely examined Charlie's personality through psychoanalytic, psychological, thematic, and pragmatic perspectives. For instance, there are studies conducted by Khusnul et al. (2017), Sinta et al. (2019), and Warren (2025), which identify Charlie as an introverted and psychologically complex character. Meanwhile, linguistic studies such as Tenriuji et al. (2021), and Nunung (2018) investigate politeness principle and women's language features in the novel. Although these studies contribute to understanding Charlie's characterization, none employs Halliday's transitivity system to examine how Charlie's personality is realized through grammatical

choices. Similarly, previous transitivity studies on literary texts have focused on characterization in other novels and short stories rather than on Charlie's language in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.

This gap indicates the need for a linguistic investigation that connects transitivity analysis with personality representation. Unlike previous studies that interpret Charlie's introversion primarily through psychological theories, the present research explores how his introverted personality is constructed through the distribution of transitivity process types. By integrating Systemic Functional Linguistics with Jung's theory of introversion, this study seeks to demonstrate that grammatical patterns are not merely formal structures, but also a meaningful resource for construction literary characterization.

In consequence, this research analyses the transitivity processes associated with Charlie's clauses in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. This study specifically investigates the dominant process types employed by the protagonist and explains how these linguistic patterns contribute to the representation of Charlie as an introverted character. It is expected that the findings will contribute both to Systemic Functional Linguistics and to literary stylistics by illustrating the relationship between grammatical choices and psychological characterization.

1.2. Research Problems

Despite the fact that Charlie's introversion is widely acknowledged as a defining characteristic of his characterization in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*,

existing research has mainly addressed it through psychoanalytic lens and thematic frameworks, which treat it as a matter of behavior and narrative description rather than as a property of language itself. However, if introversion is fundamentally about how psychic energy is directed as Jung (1921/1971) theorizes, then this orientation should leave a detectable trace in grammatical structure of a character's language, especially in how transitivity process construes his experience of the world (Halliday & Matthiesen, 2014). There is no current research has yet examined this possibility. Thus, the present research addresses this gap by utilising transitivity system to analyze Charlie's language in order to determine which processes dominate is characterization, how they construe his inner and outer experience, and how their distribution contributes to linguistic representation of his introversion. Therefore, this research aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the types and frequency distribution of transitivity processes found in Charlie's language in Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*?
2. How do the dominant transitivity processes construe Charlier's internal experiences and external actions in Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*?
3. How does the dominance of Mental processes represent Charlie's introversion through his language in Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*?

1.3. Purpose of Research

This research analyses the language of Charlie, the main character of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) by Stephen Chbosky, using Systemic Functional Linguistics, specifically Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity system. Charlie is generally known in both popular and scholarly readings of the novel as the typical introvert. He is a self-described wallflower who observes the world from the periphery rather than engaging it from the center. However, whereas past research has used psychoanalytic and thematic frameworks to examine Charlie's introversion, the language structures that define his inner world have received little attention. This research proposes that transitivity analysis provides a uniquely precise and systematic method of revealing those structures.

With this aim in mind, the researcher pursues the following objectives:

1. To identify the types and frequency distribution of transitivity processes in Charlie's language in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.
2. To describe how the dominant transitivity processes construe Charlie's internal experiences and external actions in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.
3. To explain how the dominance of Mental processes represents Charlie's introversion through his language in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.

1.4. Previous Studies

Several scholars have utilized Halliday's transitivity system on literary works to investigate how language shapes character, ideology, and psychological states. These investigations establish transitivity analysis as a useful tool for literary

interpretation, and they serve as the methodological framework for the current research. Studies that analyse using the transitivity framework have been made as follows: A research by Shahzadi, A., et al (2022) who made an analysis of A research of protagonist's identity shift in short story 'Bingo' in the perspective of Dhaka Fall 1971. Second, there is research by Nugraha, S, I. (2020) about an analysis of the transitivity system on building character of Mr. Summers in 'The Lottery' by Shirley Jackson. Third, through research by Faizin, A., et al. (2022) made a transitivity analysis of the characters' actions in Joseph Jacob's 'Fairy Tales'. Fourth, Rashid, A (2016) did research about transitivity analysis of Hiroko's characters in 'Burnt Shadows'. Fifth, there is research by Syed, F, I., et al. (2021) that examined the transitivity analysis of female characters in 'The Boarding House' by James Joyce.

Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) has gained scholarly attention across a number of academia fields, particularly in the fields of adolescent psychology, trauma studies, and literary criticism. The following studies are most directly relevant to the present research, as they engage with the novel's protagonist, Charlie, and his psychological profile.

First, Tenriuji, A., et al (2021) conducted research on Stephen Chbosky's novel *Perks of Being a Wallflower*. This research aims to examine the type of politeness principle (Leech, 1983) that exists and to analyse how the politeness principle is applied in the novel. Moreover, the characters express their politeness using the pragmatic scale's politeness by following measurement. The cost-benefit

scale, the optionally scale, the indirectness scale, and the social distance scale are among the pragmatic scales.

Second, analysis research of Women Language contained in the *Perks of Being a Wallflower* movie script by Nunung, K (2018). Based on the findings of the analysis, the women's language features found in this movie script include the use of lexical hedges, tag question, rising or question intonation, empty adjective, intensifier, hypercorrect grammar, super polite form, and the avoidance of strong swear words. Furthermore, the findings show that the function of the women's language features demonstrates the speaker's stronger assertion, admiration for something, and to emphasize the speaker's judgment of something.

Charlie's character was examined through psychoanalytic frameworks by Khusnul et al. (2017) and Sinta et al. (2019), drawing respectively on introversion typology and Freudian theory. According to Khusnul et al. (2017), Charlie's personalities are Shy, Emotional, Honest, Caring, Uncommunicative, Hard Working, and High Sexual Desire, according to the results of the analysis. It also demonstrates that Charlie's childhood experiences played a significant role in shaping his adult personality. Sinta et al. (2019) provides more detailed typology, who identified Charlie's behavior as an introvert into two categories: psychological and social. The study also divided Charlie's introversion into four subtypes: social, thinking, anxious, and restrained. Warren (2025) approached the novel from a literary-critical standpoint, arguing that Charlie's emotional world is shaped by repression, cultural silence, and the absence of safe emotional spaces,

with the novel ultimately foregrounding the value of empathy and connection in recovery.

While each of the five studies discussed above adds substantially to the academic understanding of the novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and its characters, they each contribute to a significant and constant gap in the existing literature. Studies that analyze the novel from a linguistic viewpoint, such as Tenriuji et al. (2021) and Nunung (2018), focus on pragmatic and sociolinguistic characteristics rather than the grammatical system of transitivity or Charlie's psychological aspects. Studies that directly address Charlie's psychology, particularly Sinta et al. (2019), Warren (2025), and Khusnul et al. (2017), establish his introversion and reserved personality as defining and analytically significant traits, but they do so solely through psychoanalytic and thematic frameworks, without considering the linguistic structures through which those traits are expressed and constructed. While Sinta et al. (2019) validate Charlie's various characteristics of introverted behavior, they do so through behavioral and psychoanalytic observation rather than linguistic analysis. However, there are no studies have yet to use a systemic functional language standpoint, using M.A.K Halliday's transitivity system theory to analyse Charlie's introverted personality.

There is no research that have yet addresses the question of whether and how Charlie's introversion is reflected in the distribution of transitivity process types in his language. Which is, whether his grammatical choices as a Senser, Actor, and participant in various process types systematically represent his inward

psychological orientation. As a result, the researcher decided to conduct research on this topic in order to fill a gap in the existing research. Thus, this research situates itself at the intersection of SFL transitivity research and introversion psychology, that provides a grammatical analysis of Charlie's language that addresses what psychoanalytic and thematic approaches have, by definition, been unable to account for: the clause-by-clause linguistic construction of an introverted self.

1.5. Scope of the Research

The researcher intends to examine the transitivity process used by the main character in the selected novel's dialog to prove the introverted characteristic from the main character of the novel, Charlie. As a result, the author focuses on the utterances from Charlie's dialogue and narrative in Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. The research's data is taken from Charlie's epistolary narration in Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. Due to the novel's structure is structured as a series of personal letters that Charlie wrote to anonymous recipient, his language appears in two structurally distinct forms: first, in his letter-writing narration, which he directly addresses his anonymous friend to reflect on, describe, and interpret his experiences; second, in his reported dialogue where he quotes speech that took place between himself and other characters within the scenes he narrates his own grammatical involvement.

The research only draws from the first option, Charlie's writing narration, since there is the main location where his introspective, self-directed language is formed. In order to ensure that every analyzed clause directly constructs Charlie as a participant in a process rather than narrating events or describing characters from which he is grammatically absent, sampling within this narration-only corpus was further limited to clauses in which Charlie appears as a grammatical participant through the first-person pronouns I or me.

1.6. Writing Organization

This thesis is divided into four chapters: the first is an introduction to the thesis, the second is the explanation of the method applied, the third is the finding and discussion of this paper, and the final chapter is the conclusion of the research. Additional information will be explained below:

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION: This chapter provides the background of the research, the research problems, research questions, objectives of the research, scope of the research, significance of the research, and writing organization. It also explains the object of the research and the data used in this research.

CHAPTER II THEORY AND METHOD: This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework and the methodology used in the research. The theoretical section converses about the systemic functional language as the linguistic field that covers the transitivity system. It also presents the theory of characterization,

and the theory of personality types. The methodological section describes the research design, data source, data collection techniques, and data analysis procedures.

CHAPTER III RESULT AND DISCUSSION: This chapter provides the findings of the research. The result and the discussion are organized based on the research questions explained previously and explains how the findings address each research question.

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION: this last chapter summarizes and concludes this research findings and presents them drawn from the analysis.