

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

In analyzing literature through a linguistic lens, scholars often investigate how language constructs one's character. Different author employed various approaches to present their characters in literary works. Although they are characterized as a whole, characters may also undergo shifts in thought and behavior, showing how they learn and grow throughout the story.

As Carter and Pickett (2017) state, a reader's perception can be influenced by factors such as a character's growth and the plot's circumstances. In relation to that, Speech and Thought Presentation Theory (STPT) might be one of the tools to examine characters' growth in the novel. It helps to reveal characters' spoken dialogue and inner thoughts, and improves readers' understanding of their feelings and emotions.

According to Leech and Short (2007), it is acceptable when the author attempts to depict the character's experience or consciousness of their thoughts, rather than just reporting what the character thinks. STPT gives readers access to a character's mind, shaping how that mind is understood. This makes STPT an effective method for examining character growth and the interactions between narrative voice and reader perception.

Besides linguistic approaches, psychological theories also offer significant insight into the development of identity and behaviour. As Bandura (1977) argues,

most learning occurs through observing others' behaviour and its effects, rather than through direct experience. In social psychology, observational learning theory helps explain how people acquire behaviours, attitudes, and emotional responses by observing others in social situations.

Observational learning has been used in various fields, including the workplace and education. A workplace case study shows a positive influence on employees' self-confidence in their performance, with authentic experience and social persuasion being the most notable factors considered effective (Nurgabylov et al., 2020). Additionally, observational learning can be used as a technique in group counselling to improve students' academic self-efficacy through live modelling (Rafiola and Ramli, 2018).

In literary works, fictional characters are often shown learning, adapting, and changing as the plot unfolds and through their interactions with other characters. As in real life, a person's motives and character in fiction are deduced from their outward behaviour, including their speech, actions, and demeanor (Leech and Short, 2007). A collaborative method that explores how psychology and linguistics are used to illustrate characters' evolving identities, thereby integrating STPT and observational learning theory.

The writer chose "A Psalm of the Wild-built" by Becky Chambers as the subject of the study because Sibling Dex, a nonbinary tea monk and the protagonist, still feels the urge to fill the void within themselves, even though they live in a utopian world. This novella highlights their journey toward finding life's purpose and self-acceptance. Moreover, the way the characters' interactions lead Sibling

Dex to grow, particularly within a setting that differs from today's reality, is worth discussing further.

Sibling Dex's development is revealed not only linguistically, through shifts in speech and thought, but also structurally, through their interactions with other characters that serve as a learning ground for them. While literary analysis has significantly explored STPT as a tool for revealing characters' voices and mental states, only a few have examined how STPT interacts with psychological theory, particularly observational learning theory.

Moreover, "A Psalm of the Wild-Built" has not received sufficient scholarly attention, especially regarding how the author presents the main character's character development, which undergoes an existential and emotional metamorphosis. By combining STPT and observational learning, this study fills the gap by analyzing the linguistic and psychological aspects of Sibling Dex's character arc. Furthermore, it broadens the field of linguistic investigation into fiction and contributes to an inclusive multidisciplinary approach to literary study.

1.2 Research Questions

Derived from the previous background of the study, the following three research questions will be examined in this research.

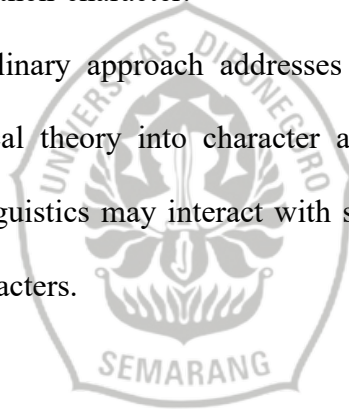
1. What kind of modes does the narrator present speech and thought presentation in different phases within the story?
2. How does the speech and thought presentation theory support the process of observational learning of Sibling Dex?

3. How does the interplay between speech and thought presentation and observational learning shape Sibling Dex's character development?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine Sibling Dex's speech and thought presentation and to understand changes in their character development. Additionally, this study integrates observational learning theory by tracking changes in speech and thought presentation to examine how the modelling process may affect how Sibling Dex expresses and develops their character.

This interdisciplinary approach addresses a gap in literary analysis by integrating psychological theory into character analysis. It thus offers a fresh perspective on how linguistics may interact with social psychology to reveal the growth of fictional characters.



1.4 Review of Previous Studies

Several studies that used STPT as a theoretical framework were reviewed to highlight the differences in application and novelty between the present study and these studies. As a tool for revealing the relationship between the author and the characters, Khan and Sajjad (2023) analyze the STPT in Sidhwa's novel *Water*, noting that the author has delegated authority to the characters by integrating more speech-mode presentation, particularly direct speech, than thought-mode presentation.

Additionally, a study by Zebari and Muhammadzadeh (2021) shows that in Alice Munro's "Chance," the author appears to devote little attention to the characters' inner thoughts, as evidenced by the absence of Direct Thought. Meanwhile, the most used STPTs are Direct Speech and Free Direct Speech, which underscore the story from the protagonist's perspective.

In relation to readers' perception, Hanif et al. (2023) examined STPT in Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, finding that the frequent use of Indirect Thought can reveal the inner lives of characters. It may help readers feel the characters' thoughts and emotions. Moreover, the use of STPT reveals the character's developing thoughts and influences readers' understanding of the character (Ahmad & Narajan, 2020; Guo, 2017).

Regarding observational learning, some papers show that this approach across sectors has yielded positive outcomes. A study by Ma et al. (2018), investigated whether children who had cheated by peeking in a guessing game would admit to it by integrating observational learning through observing their classmate confess to peeking and implementing praise and giving gifts. This study demonstrates that observational learning can promote honesty in children's behaviour.

Additionally, Morse, Carman, and Zint (2019) found, through their study in South Korea, that observational learning involving tour guides and peer ecotourists may lead to environmentally responsible behavioural (ERB) intentions among ecotourists. Evidence from the education sector also shows that imitation and

modelled behaviour are effective and have positive outcomes for students' learning process (Xu, 2021).

“A Psalm of the Wild-built” has already been studied through the lens of queer futurity, as Morris (2025) argues that self-care is key to exploring both individual lives and political action without burning out. However, Paul and Alan (2024) examine how the character's interaction with a sentient robot may alter their psychological state and self-perceptions. By employing schizoanalysis, cyborg embodiment, and posthuman subjectivity, they argue that the novel offers new insights into the characters' emotional and psychological development.

Some evidence from earlier studies suggests that STPT can be utilized to understand characters' emotional and psychological states, which aligns with the purpose of the present study. However, no studies have examined the journey of character development, particularly in relation to observational learning theory, because existing research typically treats linguistic form and behaviour change as separate domains.

1.5 Scope of the Studies

This study will investigate the Sibling Dex's character development through their learning process toward self-acceptance in the novel “A Psalm for the Wild-built.”

The present study will use the speech and thought presentation by Leech and Short (2007) to underscore the character's shift, especially from the use of voice control throughout the story.

Moreover, it also delves deeper into how Sibling Dex's character growth may occur from a social psychology perspective, particularly through the lens of Bandura's (1977) observational learning theory. In addition, the data will use only the speeches and thoughts of Sibling Dex that demonstrate their psychological states to track their linguistic and psychological shifts.

