An Analysis of Characterization of Jo March in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*

Ade Suci Oktariani
University of Bengkulu
oktarianiadesuci@gmail.com

Abstract

Louisa May Alcott manifested her ideas through Jo March''s role in the 19th century as the main character of the popular classical novel *Little Women* so that readers emotionally connected and sympathized with the story, plots, values mentioned in her work. This research aims to investigate the characteristics of Jo March as the main character by identifying the dialogue and stories in the novel using the descriptive-qualitative method. This research aims to find Jo March's dominant characteristics and describe her personality using the data. The findings related to the research questions showed that eight characteristics represent Jo March as the main character in the novel Little Women, such as: boyish, outspoken, creative, daring, real, cranky, ambitious, careless, and principled. This study of characterization will help readers to understand a literary work deeply. In addition, characterization is an essential element in writing a literary work or narrative text, which is often used as authentic materials in the ELT classroom so that it also helps students and teachers in understanding literary works in the classroom.

Keywords: *characterization, main character, novel.*

Introduction

A novel as part of literary works has captured the public's interest as it represents human characters, behavior, and surroundings narratively using various expresses delivered by the presence of characters defined by the author through dialogues and stories. Henry (2008, as cited in Tarihoran and Dewi, 2020) defined a novel as a long-written work containing a succession of stories about a person's life, emphasizing each actor's character's personality and nature. As the work of the novel comes from the author's idea, the analysis of this literary work needs to be conducted to tackle the detailed information so that the meaning and purpose of the story would be transferred thoroughly to the readers. There are some aspects of key elements that can be analyzed in the novel to understand the author's work. These key elements mentioned by Semi (1998) stated that the fundamental aspects of literary works include theme, story, place, character, characterization, and figure of speech. These components said determined the content of the novel as literary work.

Characters as part of the intrinsic element of the novel play a significant role in portraying the fundamental ideas of an author to the readers indicated by dialogues and narration. In order to understand the characters in fictional literature, characterization can be used to emphasize aspects of each character as the author often noticeably introduce them. According to Aquino (1976), characterization analyzes the primary character's growth and personality. It is the process of developing a fictional image of a person, replete with traits, features, and motives, which refers to the creation and development of a character broadly. Reams (2015) mentioned that there are two types of characterization: direct and indirect. Anything that the author tells the reader directly is referred to as direct characterization. Anything that is shown to the reader indirectly by another source is referred to as indirect characterization. Specifically, Florman (2017) stated that direct characterization is when the author directly discusses a character's characteristics. A narrator, another character, or the personality in question could provide a direct description. On the other hand, rather than describing a character's attributes overtly, an author uses indirect characterization to show the character as he or she moves through the world, enabling the reader to deduce the character's qualities from his or her actions. Indirect characterization can be analyzed using four different methods: speech, thought, action, and looks (Burroway, 2000 as cited in Putri 2017).

The study of characterization in the novel aids the reader in comprehending and empathizing with many characters in the story, ensuring that the message of the literary work is conveyed effectively to the audience. Furthermore, the study of characterization is beneficial to ELT students who use literary works as learning materials. It provides a better understanding of how authors create characters using various categories of character traits and then assesses how well those representations reflect reality. As a result, students will develop their characters for stories or analyze literary works in the future.

Several previous studies related to this topic, firstly coming from Cindy Putri (2017) on her study that analyzed the characterization and dominant character possessed by 'Amy' as the main

character in Gone Girl movie version. The research was carried out using the descriptive qualitative approach. The study's data were transcribed into 39 different sentences, and the result shows that Amy's characterizations are intelligent, perfectionist, insecure, liar, and vengeful. The other previous research about characterization is from Patmarinanta &Ernawati (2016), the study analyzed The Fault in Our Stars, a novel by John Green. This research aims to examine the personalities of Hazel and August as the main characters in the novel. The writers examined the novel's character dialogue, quotes, and relevant topics such as journals, books, and magazines. Depressed, books lover, fighter, stubborn, chivalrous, kind, and loyal are characteristics that reflect Hazel and August's personality traits.

This study focuses on characterization as reflected by „Jo March" the main character in the novel Little Women by Loisa May Alcott. Little Woman is a classical novel firstly published in 1868 during World War I, which tells about the struggle of March"s sisters. The writer of this study wants to find out the characterization and the most dominant characteristics of Jo March by analyzing the direct and indirect characterization from the novel chapter I-8, where the story still revolves around Jo March"s childhood.

Research Methodology

The writer applied a descriptive-qualitative approach in conducting this research. According to Sugiyono (2010), qualitative research is descriptive. It indicates that the information gathered was in the form of words rather than numbers. The data on this research was collected using the documentary technique proposed by Ary et al. (2002). This technique allowed the writer to gather information by observing an event or scene on popular culture documents such as books, films, and videos. This study analyzed the characterization of Jo March as the main character in Little Women and determined the most prominent characteristic that she has by analyzing the novel from chapters 1-8 using a direct and indirect characterization approach. The writer used Burroway's (2000) framework about indirect characterization and Florman's (2017) about direct characterization to analyze the data. Some steps taken in conducting this research such as: read the novel, underlined the data, classifying the data which indicated the characterization of the main character, putting the data found on each characteristic's category, serving the data on the table, determining the most dominant characteristics, and describing the data.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

There were eight characteristics of Jo March as the main character found in the novel such as (1) boyish, (2) outspoken, (3) creative, (4) daring/brave, (5) cranky, (6) ambitious, (7) careless (8) principled. The data found for each characteristic of Jo March in the novel Little Women chapter 1-8 can be seen on the table bellows:

The numbers of Jo March Characteristics in the Novel Little Women

No	Characteristics of Jo March	Total data for each characteristic
1	Boyish	12
2	Outspoken	13
3	Creative	5
4	Daring/brave	3
5	Cranky	6
6	Ambitious	2
7	Careless	2
8	Principled	2
Total data: 46		**The most dominant characteristic: Outspoken**

The data above were gathered using a qualitative method by reading, identifying, and describing the data using qualitative methods. Furthermore, Jo March's characteristics were analyzed using a direct and indirect characterization approach so that the form of data analyzed in this study is speech, looks, action, thoughts, dialogue, narration, and description. Out of 46 data found and analyzed, the writer found that Outspoken is the most dominant characteristic of Jo March as the main character of this novel, followed by boyish, cranky, and creative. The details of the characterization analysis can be seen as follow:

1. **Boyish**

   Data1: Jo immediately sat up, put her hands in her pockets, and began to whistle. (Little Women, 1869, p.20)

   Source: Planetpdf.com.

   The first characterization of Jo March found in the novel is boyish, as reflected from the data above. The writer's narration mentioned that Jo March performed masculine gestures such as whistling, considered boyish action in the 19th century. There are around 12 data in the form of dialogue, narration, self-thought, etc. She has an interest in doing male activities and performing unladylike gestures.

2. **Outspoken**

   Data 2: „How silly!" said Jo. „Let him be a musician if he wants to, and not plague his life out sending him to college, when he hates to go". (Little Women, 1869, p.97)

   Source: Planetpdf.com.

   Outspoken is one of the characterizations of Jo March found in Little Women, written by Louisa May Alcott. Jo March is described as someone who can express herself openly and honestly in telling her mind. It can be seen from Jo's dialogue as she conveyed her thought blatantly by using 'How silly' as a frustrated expression and elaborated her mind through spoken expression on the next dialogue. She is expressive though her opinion may surprise or offend others in the story.

3. **Creative**

   Data 3: …Jo had worked over them patiently, putting her whole heart into her work, hoping to make something good enough to print. (Little Women, 1869, p.131)

Jo is described as someone who is creative and has a huge interest in the work of writing. Jo loves to write her script for Christmas plays and is also known among her sisters as the most talented in elaborating her ideas through written expression. Her creativity can be seen through some dialogue and narration where her family acknowledges her work through some short stories and prose she had written. The data above indicates Jo's creative characterization through narration where Jo was working hard on her short story, delivered by the author as seen from the phrases.

4. **Cranky**
Data 4: …Jo had the least self-control and had hard times trying to curb the fiery spirit, which was continually getting her into trouble. (Little Women, 1869, p.128)

As mentioned in the monologue above, Jo has the least self-control among March's sisters as she easily gets upset. She often has difficulties in controlling her anger, especially while arguing and keeping her opinion. Her bold and outspoken personality also influences this indicated direct and indirectly from the data.

5. **Brave**
Data 5: Don't I wish to go as a drummer, a vivan—what is its name? Alternatively, a nurse, so I could be near him and help him,' exclaimed Jo, with a groan. (Little Women, 1869, p. 30)

Another characterization of Jo March found in the novel is brave. Jo is the bravest one among her sisters and is not afraid to try so many things in life. From the data above, she mentioned that she would love to take part in world war I as a nurse or drummer without thinking about the risk even though at that time she was still young, having that kind of thought framed Jo as a young lady who is not scared to take chances and trust herself and her actions. This mentality also shows that Jo is someone who is not afraid to take a risk.

6. **Ambitious**
Data 6: …Jo's ambition was to do something very splendid. What it was, she had no idea as yet but left it for time to tell her. (Little Women, 1869, p.65)

Ambitious is the characterization of Jo March conveyed by Louisa through dialogues, narration, self-thought, etc., written in the novel. Jo, from the monologue above described as a person who has a life goal and believes in herself. She has vision and is not afraid to dream even though she is still unsure what steps she needs to take to achieve it. Not only that, Jo is tempted to aim for something big in life and also can be described as a person of action.

7. **Careless**
    Data 7: …Just my luck! You should not have asked me to do it. I always spoil everything. (Little Women, 1869, p.43)

Source: Planetpdf.com.

As stated from the dialogue above, Jo tends to make mistakes and does not take proper care of her actions. She said that she always spoils everything when it comes to cooking and working in the kitchen. She is careless for doing certain activities and how she dresses up, which is mentioned from another novel's data.

8. **Principled**
    Data 8: Her anger never lasted long, and having humbly confessed her fault, she sincerely repented and tried to do better. (Little Women, 1869, p.128)

Source: Planetpdf.com.

The last characterization of Jo as the main character stated direct and indirectly by the author is principled. She is someone who knows what is right and wrong in life and also acts morally. The data above explained that Jo March willingly admitted she was wrong and confessed that she made mistakes openly. The narration above also indicates that Jo realizes her fault and tries her hardest to improve to be a better person.

Discussion

This study aims to determine Jo March's characterization as the main character in Louisa May Alcott's Little Women and determine the most significant characteristics of Jo March using direct and indirect characterization. The study of characterization helps readers understand and relate to the work and character of the story deeply; furthermore, understanding how characterization developed by the author helps another writer create their characters in another literary work. On the other hand, literary work in ELT also plays a significant role as authentic materials used by teachers and students in language learning. Alemi (2011) stated that literature allows students to make inferences, understand various levels of meaning, develop critical thinking abilities, and learn to accept ambiguities in the text. The study of characterization will help students analyze the literary work as learning materials and help them create their characters in a narrative text.

The data of this study was gathered by using Burroway's (2000) framework about indirect characterization (speech, thoughts, actions, looks) as well as Florman's (2017) direct characterization (narration and direct description). The result of this study shows that out of all 46 data analyzed, each of them can be categorized into different personalities such as boyish, outspoken, creative, cranky, brave, ambitious, careless, and principled, with "Outspoken" as the main characterization with 13 data out of 46 data found in the novel. The novel Little Women depicts the daily activities and struggles faced by March"s family during the civil war. Jo's 'Outspoken' characterization was indicated directly and indirectly by Louisa, she is not afraid to convey her thought and opinion freely and expresses her mind without hesitating. For example, Jo once in the novel expresses her frustration, „How silly!" said

Jo. „Let him be a musician if he wants to…". The next characterization possessed by Jo is „Boyish". As a boyish young lady, Jo March is defined as a person who often performs masculine gestures such as whistling and running mentioned by the author through actions, which is part of Indirect characterization according to Burroway (2000). Another boyish characterization shown by Jo March can be seen through her speech as she mentioned that she would love to go to the war and fight to help her father, whereas back then, women did not directly go to war and fight on the battlefield as males soldiers only performed it. Unlike other girls, Jo March is careless about her appearance, which differs from young girls around her age who love to dress up and be pretty. It is seen through narration by the author in the novel, categorized as direct characterization Florman (2017).

In addition, Jo March wishes that she is a male as it would be easier for her to travel wherever she wants, and it also makes her able to share her thought freely. The novel also shows that Jo March was the one who was able to keep her family afloat and self-sufficient because she was a working woman who made money from her mind's creativity. She is a person who often being absorbed with reading and the work of writing. She loves to write scripts for Christmas's play performance. It indicates 'creative' as one of Jo's characterizations found in the novel. Jo March is also ambitious to achieve her goal. The writer described her as an ambitious writer that dared to dream big and knew what to do in her life. It was shown in the novel where Jo said that her main goal was to publish her work of writings. Ambitious characterization makes the reader believe that anything is possible, especially for a woman.

On the other hand, Jo March, as the main character, has a short temper. She gets irritated easily and has difficulties controlling her anger. This characterization is further classified as 'Cranky,' where the data is taken from direct and indirect characterization. Jo's bravery is also her distinguishing feature found in the novel chapters 1-8. The dialogue and description mentioned by the writer in the novel show that Jo is not afraid to try new things in life. She would love to go to war, being a drummer or even a nurse. The writer also mentioned through direct description that Jo March is the bravest one among her sisters. The last characterization in the novel Little Women found is careless and principled. Jo March tends to make mistakes in doing house chores, especially cooking and any work in the kitchen, as she always spoiled everything. Lastly, Jo March knows what is bad and good, and she acts morally. It is indicated through direct and indirect characterization found in the novel, classified as 'principled' characterization.

The characterization of Jo March as the main character is pretty much different compared to the characterization found in previous research by Putri (2017) about Amy as the main character in the gone girl movie version. Even though both Jo March and Amy as the main characters are women, each author emphasizes their characters differently. It is also probably influenced by the genre of the novel and the writer's point of view. In addition, this study about characterization as a literary device in this novel portrays Jo's distinctive nature or feature by using direct and indirect characterization by Burroway (2000) and Florman (2017). This direct and indirect characterization was also used in the

previous research conducted by Patmarinanta & Ernawati (2016) that analyzed the main characters on *The Fault in Our Stars* and Putri (2017), who analyzed the character of the main character of *Gone Girl* movie version to analyze and gather the data.

Conclusion

This study of characterization allows readers to get a better understanding of the character in the novel. There can be no plot or environment without characters. Not only that, the study of characterization helps the reader to understand the story better. For ELT, literary work such as novels is used as the learning materials in the classroom. Hence, the characterization study will help students in the ELT classroom create their characters in the narrative text and understand the materials in depth. The researcher examined the characterization of the novel's main character in this study. According to the researcher, this new has far more interesting topic for future academics to describe. As the writer of this research is mainly concerned with characterization, the next researcher can explore the character development of Jo March, the novel's main character.

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