

Harry Potter's Identity Search: A Character Analysis in Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to discuss the journey of self-discovery of the character Harry Potter in the film "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone." In this film, Harry is an orphan who grows up in a challenging environment, trying to find his identity amidst the conflict between the wizarding world and normal life. This research also highlights the aspect of translation by comparing the English and Indonesian versions. The method used is qualitative descriptive analysis, with data obtained through in-depth observation of important scenes, dialogues, and interactions between characters that play a crucial role in the identity search process. The findings of this study indicate that Harry's journey in discovering his identity is influenced by several factors, such as family background, experiences at Hogwarts, and friendships. In this film, it shows how a person's identity is formed through their life experiences.

Keywords: Harry Potter, Character, Film, Identity Search.

INTRODUCTION

Harry Potter, a fictional character created by British author J.K. Rowling, was first introduced in the novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), later published internationally as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. The story was adapted into a film in 2001, the first installment of a series depicting the maturation of its protagonist across seven novels. The *Sorcerer's Stone* centers on an orphan who grows up with relatives who conceal his origins and reject the wizarding world, and who discovers on his eleventh birthday that he is a wizard destined to confront the dark wizard Voldemort. This premise makes identity search a foundational

concern of the narrative.

Identity search is a well-documented developmental issue, particularly among adolescents who face confusion about the self due to social pressure, environmental change, and external expectation. In the case of adopted or fostered children, clarifying one's origins is considered essential to prevent identity confusion (Adel, 2018). Character, in this sense, is not innate but is shaped through systematic and directed experience (Lickona, 2014). Previous research on the Harry Potter franchise has approached the character from several angles, including personality and conflict analysis (Fuadah & Agustina, 2023), psychological analysis of the protagonist (Gusti, 2019), and analysis

of social factors affecting Harry (Hartika et al., 2017).

However, these studies largely treat personality, psychology, or social factors as separate concerns, and few connect Harry's identity development explicitly to Erik Erikson's psychosocial framework of identity versus role confusion within the specific context of the first film. Studies that do apply identity or trauma frameworks to the franchise, such as Shiong and Wang's (2022) analysis of trauma, love, and identity development, focus on a later installment, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, leaving the identity-formation process in the *Sorcerer's Stone* comparatively underexamined.

Meanwhile, studies situated closer to literary and cultural concerns, such as Dwi's (2024) discussion of environmental acceptance and children's behavior, tend to prioritize thematic or behavioral concerns over the intersection of identity formation and cross-media translation. This study addresses that gap by examining the *Sorcerer's Stone* specifically, combining character analysis grounded in Erikson's psychosocial theory with a translation-studies perspective, treating the film as an instance of intersemiotic translation (Jakobson, 1959) in which verbal narrative is converted into visual and audio narrative.

This study aims to analyze the factors influencing Harry Potter's identity search in *Harry Potter and the*

Sorcerer's Stone, to examine the role of friendship and significant relationships in that process, and to assess the relevance of these findings to translation studies, particularly the translation of culturally specific terms. The novelty of this study lies in situating identity analysis within the field of English literature with a translation concentration, offering insight relevant not only to literary character analysis but also to translators tasked with preserving character identity and cultural meaning across languages.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, appropriate for analyzing character and identity search in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001). Qualitative research in this context is understood as an intensive, document-based investigation that describes and interprets phenomena through analytical reflection on available evidence, rather than through numerical hypothesis testing (Erikson, 1986). The object of the research is the film itself, from which data were obtained through the documentation technique (Creswell, 2009), namely the systematic recording and collection of information from an existing source, in this case scenes, dialogues, and visual narrative. Documentation was chosen because the material is readily available, requires no additional cost beyond the time needed for analysis, offers a broad contextual background for the research topic, and can serve as a basis for triangulating the

consistency of the data. The primary data source is the audiovisual content of the film, while the researcher functioned as the main instrument in identifying and interpreting relevant scenes. Data analysis was carried out by observing dialogue, visual narrative, and symbolic elements that contribute to the construction of Harry's identity, and by relating these findings to Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory of identity versus role confusion as well as to relevant previous studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research analyzes the process of identity search undergone by the main character in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* through a qualitative approach, focusing on internal conflict, social influence, and character development, and further considers the relevance of these findings to translation studies given the program's translation concentration.

Internal Conflict as a Trigger for Identity Search

Internal conflict constitutes the foundational trigger of Harry's identity search. At the outset of the film, Harry is portrayed as an orphan living with the Dursley family, who not only withhold information about his origins but actively reject the existence of the wizarding world. This unsupportive environment produces feelings of confusion and alienation, visible in the dialogue and situations that emphasize Harry's lack of belonging within his own family.

A decisive turning point occurs when Hagrid tells Harry, "You're a wizard,

Harry." This brief statement functions as the catalyst for Harry's transformation, moving him from a figure who feels displaced toward an individual who begins to question his role and identity in an entirely new world. This moment closely mirrors Erik Erikson's psychosocial stage of identity versus role confusion, in which individuals, particularly adolescents, struggle to establish a coherent sense of self within their social environment (Erikson, 1986).

Visually, the film reinforces this internal conflict through Harry's hesitant body language and understated expressions of confusion, complemented by narrative cues that imply an internal monologue without making it explicit through dialogue. This visual restraint underscores the psychological weight of the moment: Harry is not simply gaining new information but is being asked to integrate his past, marked by neglect and uncertainty, with an unfamiliar identity as a wizard at Hogwarts. This finding supports Smith's (2018) observation that *Harry Potter* functions less as an ordinary fictional protagonist and more as a symbol of the broader struggle toward self-understanding, particularly regarding uncertain origins and the search for identity at a young age. The internal conflict, in this sense, is not incidental to the plot but structurally necessary: without the rupture created by Hagrid's revelation, Harry's subsequent journey toward a stable identity would have no starting point.

Social Environment and Interpersonal Relationships

Beyond internal conflict, Harry's

social environment plays a decisive role in shaping his emerging identity. His relationships with Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger provide emotional support that builds his confidence and sense of belonging, while his rivalry with Draco Malfoy functions as external pressure that pushes Harry to reject the negative identity imposed upon him.

Through shared experiences with Ron and Hermione, such as facing academic challenges at Hogwarts or confronting the mountain troll, Harry learns values central to identity formation: friendship, loyalty, and courage. This is illustrated in Hermione's remark, "You're a great wizard, Harry," which offers Harry psychological reinforcement and contributes directly to his growing self-confidence. In contrast, Harry's interactions with Draco reveal a dynamic of social conflict that compels Harry to define his own values in opposition to those his rival represents.

These findings align with Lickona's (2014) argument that character is shaped through directed, relational experience rather than being fixed at birth. They also extend Hartika et al.'s (2017) analysis of the social pressures surrounding Harry by showing that peer relationships operate not only as sources of hardship but also, and more prominently in the Sorcerer's Stone, as sources of validation that counterbalance the neglect Harry experiences at home.

Two other relationships merit attention. Harry's introduction to the wizarding world through the Hogwarts letter marks the first moment he recognizes he possesses previously unknown power and potential, while his

encounter with Dumbledore provides insight into his background and the reasons he is regarded as significant within the wizarding community; Dumbledore functions as a guiding figure who helps Harry interpret his own identity. Meanwhile, Harry's confrontation with Voldemort, who represents the darker possibilities of power and ambition, symbolizes Harry's struggle to define an identity distinct from the one Voldemort's actions have imposed on him since infancy. Taken together, these relationships demonstrate that Harry's identity search is not an isolated internal process but one actively co-constructed through his social environment, consistent with Erikson's (1986) emphasis on the social dimension of identity formation during adolescence.

Character Transformation and Development

Across the course of the film, Harry undergoes substantial character development, moving from a hesitant, fearful child to a courageous individual with a clear sense of responsibility and moral principle. This transformation is most evident in his confrontation with Professor Quirrell, later revealed to be possessed by Voldemort, a scene that consolidates the courage and self-assurance Harry has developed throughout the narrative.

This trajectory reflects what Erikson (1986) describes as the successful resolution of the identity-versus-role-confusion stage: rather than remaining fragmented between his past as a neglected child and his new status as a

wizard, Harry increasingly integrates these dimensions of himself into a coherent identity. The transformation also corroborates Dwi's (2024) finding that environmental acceptance meaningfully shapes a child's behavior, since it is Harry's acceptance within Hogwarts, rather than any innate trait, that enables this shift. Where earlier scenes emphasize Harry's uncertainty and passivity, later scenes position him as an active agent willing to take responsibility for protecting others, indicating that his identity has moved from a state of confusion toward relative stability.

Relevance to Translation Studies

As this research is situated within an English literature program with a translation concentration, the findings also carry implications for translation studies. Understanding the dynamics of a character's identity search is essential for translators, since translation involves not merely transferring language but also conveying cultural nuance, emotional tone, and implicit meaning embedded within character and narrative.

In the case of Harry Potter, translators are required to render wizarding-world terminology with precision to avoid semantic distortion or confusion. The term "Muggle," referring to non-magical people, exemplifies this challenge: it must be translated carefully to preserve both its meaning and its cultural context, given that no direct equivalent exists in Indonesian. Because such terms are closely tied to the construction of Harry's identity as a wizard distinct from the "Muggle" world

he was raised in, imprecise translation risks weakening the very identity contrast the narrative depends on.

This concern reflects Jakobson's (1959) concept of intersemiotic translation, whereby the verbal narrative of the source novel is converted into the visual and audio narrative of film, a process that itself constitutes an additional layer of translation prior to any subsequent interlingual translation. Accuracy in conveying a character's identity is therefore central to preserving the integrity of the narrative message across languages and media. These findings suggest that identity-focused character analysis can serve as a practical resource for translation practice, helping translators anticipate which culturally loaded terms and character-defining moments require particularly careful handling to retain their meaning and emotional weight in a target language.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to analyze the factors shaping Harry Potter's identity search in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the role of friendship and significant relationships in that process, and the relevance of these findings to translation studies. The findings show that Harry's identity search is a complex process shaped jointly by internal conflict rooted in an unsupportive family background, the new social environment of the wizarding world, and interactions with pivotal characters such as Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger, Dumbledore, Draco Malfoy, and Voldemort. Across the narrative, Harry develops from an insecure, marginalized

child into a confident individual with clear moral principles, a transformation consistent with Erikson's (1986) account of identity formation during adolescence, in which individuals must integrate diverse elements of their experience into a coherent sense of self.

Beyond its contribution to character analysis, this study demonstrates that identity search in fictional narratives carries direct relevance for translation studies: preserving a character's identity across languages and media requires translators to attend closely to culturally loaded terms and identity-defining dialogue, as illustrated by the case of "Muggle." Future research is recommended to extend this analysis by examining translator strategies more directly, for instance through a comparative study of the official English and Indonesian translations of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, in order to evaluate how identity-related meaning is retained or altered in the translated text.

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