THE USE OF DEFENSE MECHANISM TO REDUCE

CHARACTERS' ANXIETY AS DEPICTED ON

MARKUS ZUSAK'S *THE BOOK THIEF*

a final project
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of *Sarjana Sastra*
in English

by
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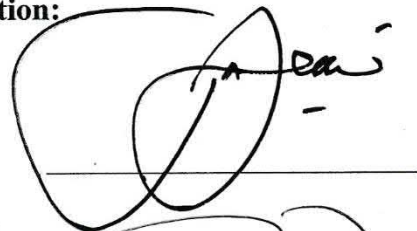**UNIVERSITAS NEGERI SEMARANG**
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APPROVAL

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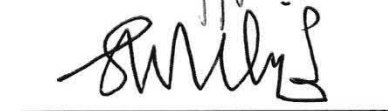   NIP. 198012062009121001

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I Wanudya Cahya Mita hereby declare that this final project entitled **The Use of Defense Mechanism to Reduce Characters' Anxiety as Depicted on Markus Zusak's** *The Book Thief* is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at my university or other institute of tertiary education. Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given in the bibliography

Semarang, 22 Juli 2019

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I realize that there are still shortcomings in this final project; therefore I will appreciate the suggestions, comments, and critics that could improve this final project.

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ABSTRACT

Anxiety is an unpleasant emotion that has symptom such as worry, fear, unhappy moods that can be felt in different level. Under the pressure of excessive anxiety, the ego is sometimes forced to take extreme measure to relieve the pressure. This study was conducted to analyze the use of defense mechanism to reduce characters' anxiety as depicted on Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*. The purposes of this study are to describe anxiety that is depicted in the novel and to explain how defense mechanisms overcome characters anxiety. This study was done using a descriptive qualitative method and using psychoanalysis theory by Sigmund Freud to explore anxiety and defense mechanism. The object of the study was the novel *The Book Thief* and this study focused on Liesel Meminger, Max Vandenburg, Hans Hubermann, and Michael Holtzapfel as the main characters. List of quotations that contain characters' utterances and actions was used as the research instrument and the data was taken through library research. In the novel, characters experienced some conflicts which happened between their id, ego and superego or morality. The conflicts mainly happened due to the environmental of Nazi Germany era where characters had to struggle to survive and maintain morality. This situation caused anxiety. The analysis of the main characters shows different methods of defense mechanism they use to reduce anxiety. The results of the study showed that the characters suffer from both neurotic and moral anxiety. To reduce those anxiety characters use some defense mechanisms like sublimation, displacement, denial, identification and rationalization

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Chapter one presents the introduction of the study that consists of the background of the study, reasons for choosing the topic, research problems, purposes of the study, significance of the study, and outline of the report.

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature relates to the world. According to Rees (1973, p.7), literature has two different meanings, broad sense and narrow senses. In the broad sense, Gyasi defines literature as anything that is written (2008, p.1), such as catalogues, time table, text books, and brochures. While in the narrow sense, Rees sees literature as writing which expresses and communicates thought, feelings and attitudes towards life (1973, p.8). After describing what he regarded as literature, Rees (1973, p.9) sums up that literature is a permanent expression in words of some thoughts or feelings in ideas about life and the world. Rees description of literature is in line with relation between literature and the world proposed by Bennet (2004, p.26), literature is implicit in a certain understanding of mimesis or imitation, and in notions of realism and naturalism, and of representation, as well as in metaphors which figure literary texts as offering a window on to the world or (in Hamlet's words) as holding a mirror up to nature. That is why fictional characters in literature as Paris (1997, p.4) said are not simply functions in a text or encoded message from the author but imagined human being whose thoughts, feelings and actions made sense in motivational terms. It makes fictional characters decent objects to

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understand about human and their thoughts and feeling. To understand about human people use psychology. Psychology is a study about behaviour, feeling and mind of human. To identify psychology that represented through literary works, literary criticism introduce psychoanalysis. Chodorow (1978, p.5) defines psychoanalysis as the method and theory directed towards the investigation and understanding of how people develop and experience unconscious fantasies (that form psyche, self, identity) and how they construct and reconstruct our felt past in the present.

The Book Thief, as Burakova (2012, p.38) said is more like a textbook example of a trauma narrative which construct past event in the present. Set in holocaust era of Nazi Germmany on period of 1939-1945 during World War II, *The Book Thief* centers around the life of Liesel Meminger, a nine-years-old girl who is addopted by ordinary Germans, Hans and Rossa Hubberman, in fictional town named Mochlin in Munich. In her new life, she has to deal with the horror of Nazi regime and the struggle to perseve the innocent of her childhood in the midst of her destructive surrounding. As the political situation in Germany deteriorated, her foster parents hiding a Jew named Max, who shares the same interest of words power of language with Liesel. Not only living in a horror of war situation with hunger and trauma of lost one, the characters of *The Book Thief* are also torn between choosing their desire survive or maintaining their conscience because the society standard of morality in Nazi society is quite different. All the situations make them suffer from anxiety. Anxiety is an unpleasant emotion that has symptom such as worry, fear and jittery which they all can be felt in different level (Hilgard, 1983, p.212). Anxiety happen when ego is overwhelmed and cannot imbalance the

reality principle with the demand of id (pleasure principle) or superego (moral principle). Anxiety appears as danger sign. Therefore, a person who undergoes anxiety must do maneuver through defense mechanism. According to Freud, self-defense mechanism is a strategy which is used by person to defend Id impulse expression and resist the pressure of superego (Abrams, 1979, p.60). In this case, human needs defense mechanism to keep their feet on the ground.

In this research, I use Freud's theory of anxiety and defense mechanism to four characters in the novel. The characters are Liesel, Hans, Max and Michael. Liesel as a child from communist family is pretend to live as good German girl above her trauma of losing family and her aggression issue. Hans Hubberman, a German citizen who happens to be Liesel's adoptive father, does not support Nazi regime but playing save as bystander in order to survive the regime. Max is a Jew whose desire to live. Michael is a German soldier who suffers from survivor's guilt after losing his brother in battle field. Four of them come from different background and situation but they share one thing in common which is anxiety. In this study I try to show some various defense mechanisms used by them to reduce their anxiety. The study is never conducted before.

1.2 Reasons for Choosing the Topic

There are three reasons why Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* was chosen as the object of discussion in this study. First, *The Book Thief* is an interesting book which reveals other phenomena of Nazi Germany. The setting is quite challenging because the society standard of morality is confusing. It makes characters facing problems in maintaining morality as well as surviving the unfortunate situation. Second, the

analysis related to holocaust literature is limited and nobody analyzes this masterpiece of Markus Zusak in Universitas Negeri Semarang before. Third, this book portrays examples of anxiety because it is set in anxious era. Readers can see that the characters suffer from anxiety yet they use various methods to reduce it.

1.3   Research Questions

In this research, I limit the discussion of the novel by focusing on the following problems:

1. How is the characters' anxiety depicted in *The Book Thief*?

2. How do defense mechanisms overcome characters' anxiety?

1.4   Purposes of the Study

Based on the research questions above, this study will be aimed as follows:

1. To describe anxiety that is depicted in *The Book Thief*.

2. To explain how defense mechanisms overcome characters' anxiety.

1.5   Significance of the Study

There are four significance of this study.

1. For me, I can observe, describe and share about defense mechanism in the novel *The Book Thief*. It gives me new knowledge and personal satisfaction.

2. For the readers, empirically this topic will help them to get better understanding about defense mechanism. Practically, the result of this study will be referred as a tool to raise empathy toward holocaust victims, including ordinary Germans.

3. For Semarang State University, especially English Department, this study will add new number of collection in research product database. References for next research relating to this topic.

1.6 Outline of the Research Report

This final project is arranged into five chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction, consisting of the background of the study, the reason for choosing the topic, research problem, purposes of the study, significance of the study, and the outline of the final project report.

The second chapter presents the reviews of related literature, a review of the previous studies, review of the theoretical studies, and the theoretical framework.

The third chapter presents the research methodologies, consisting of the research design, object of study, role of the researcher, research instrument, types of data, procedure of collecting data, and procedure of analyzing data.

The fourth chapter presents discussion analysis of the novel and the answer to the questions mentioned in the research problem. The last chapter presents the conclusion of the study analysis from the previous chapter and suggestion dealing with the problem regarding the topic.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents the theory underlying the topic of the study. It consists of three subchapters. They are review of the previous studies, the theoretical background, and the theoretical framework.

2.1 Review of the Previous Studies

Since its first publication in 2005, *The Book Thief* has been used as object of various studies. There are four studies related to the book.

First is a study of post memory trauma in *The Book Thief* written by Zuzana Burakova in 2012 entitled "Haunted by Humans: Traumatic Reading of *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak". This study is inspired when she drove her husband´s grandmother to a spa in Slovakia, Burakova is witnessing a guest shouting "Deutsch is Hitler" (Burakova, 2012, p.38), as soon as he overheard a German couple speaking German. Due to this situation, Burakova believes that until now German will be blame toward holocaust trauma just because its relation to perpetrator. According to her, this situation happens because the traditional treatment of history is based on a dichotomous categorization between the good and evil, [and] in trauma studies this distinction is divided between a victim and a perpetrator (Burakova, 2012, p.38). Focusing on trauma resolution in *The Book Thief*, Burakova uses trauma theory in general as a background to support her argumentation that Zusak's decision in using Death as the narrator is succeed to articulate the objective trauma, both from victims and perpetrator. Furthermore, Burakova concluded that western

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perception of death is connected with the idea of salvation therefore; trauma resolved by death suggests its consolatory prospect. The concept of death elevates the human existence to a philosophical ethical and religious dimension and works as a healing element since the inevitability of death functions as the last hope for trauma resolution. (Burakova, 2012: 44). This study gives a comprehensive view of Death objectivity regarding victim's and perpetrator's trauma and resolution toward it.

Second is journal is entitled *Into Eternity's Certain Breadth*': *Ambivalent Escapes in Markus Zusak's The Book Thief*" written by Jenni Adams in 2010. This journal focuses on the novel's ambivalent attitude toward fear and consolation (Adams, 2010, p.225). The doublings can be seen through Death as narrator, any writing about the Holocaust for children breaks a strict taboo: that children are not to be frightened. Adams notes that having Death as narrator functions "to mediate the harsh realities of the novel's subject matter," and Death is able to "simultaneously ... confront the adolescent reader with the fact of death (in both an abstract an a historically located sense) and to offer protection from the most unsettling implications of this fact" (Adams, 2010, p.223). Kertzer finds it noteworthy that the novel "employs the world-weary and all-knowing voice of Death rather than the traumatized voice of a child to narrate" (2011, p.30), for it allows the novel to rely on a child's memoir, but "in a manner that acknowledges the limitations of basing Holocaust understanding on one child's account" (Kertzer, 2011, p. 29). Death is omniscient about the events of WWII and the Holocaust, and gives details of events that take place outside Liesel's experience. Death, as

narrator, allows a bigger picture to be conveyed and illustrates to readers that Liesel's story is only one among millions: "You could argue that Liesel Meminger had it easy. . . . Certainly, her brother practically died in her arms. Her mother abandoned her. But anything was better than being a Jew" (Zusak, 2005, p. 161). Readers are informed that Liesel's hardships only scratch the surface of the horrors committed, and her story is put into perspective in comparison to what took place in the camps. Liesel has it tough, yet her experience is liminal compared to the experience of prisoners in the death camps.

The third study is written by Grace Lee entitled "Literacy in *The Book Thief*: Complicated Matters of People, Witnessing, Death" (2015). This study examines the power of literacy to both Liesel Meminger and Max Vandernburg's lives. Literacy's power is shown by the way it affects Liesel's perspective on place, coping with her emotional trauma, and defying the Nazi culture during her short period in Molching. Lee argues that through literacy, Liesel, who are not Jew by ethnicity, nor by experiencing what the Jews go through, becomes a rhetorical Jew for as it gives her a way to stand up for herself when she is powerless and suppressed, especially when we see her circumstances in parallel with Max's circumstances. Max and Liesel have literacy and are able to cope with their emotional stress. Liesel, like Max, is able to resist the culture of Nazi Germany by continuing the traces of Jewish existence through literacy. The power of literacy, as Lee states, could also goes beyond death, or a complete end, and continues to keep memories and stories alive as the written word endures for the witnessing to be passed on (2015).

The last study is entitled "Words from the Basement: Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*" written by Susan Koprince (2011). This article explains the changing of archetypal image of the basement. Instead of embodies the humanity deepest' fear and in some cases, "buried madness, walled-in tragedy". The basement in *The Book Thief* is pictured as a shelter, a home and a setting in which words can provide salvation. Koprince also states that Liesel's passion in reading which she also learned in basement, leads her to steal the book from Nazi-book burning and the library of the major's wife. For Liesel, the basement is not only as sanctuary for words but also a place which save her life. Not only for Liesel, the basement also become a shelter for Max Vandernburg. The image of the basement as a refuge and a sanctuary for words in reinforced later in the novel through the portrait of the air-raid shelter in Liesel's neighborhood. The fear in the basement dissipates, however, when Liesel begins reading aloud to the gathering. Her story distracts the adults, and the children are calmed by the sound of Liesel's voice. From then on, Liesel reads to her neighbors during every bombing raid.

Reviews of the studies above mostly discussed about trauma and the power of literacy and words. Indeed, they state Liesel's coping her trauma by reading, but Liesel also commits other acts that can be considered as coping mechanism, like her act of stealing or her aggression. The studies above only mention anxiety that caused by trauma of lost ones, while in this study the anxiety is not limited on anxiety caused by that trauma. Besides, I analyze four characters to know various kind of defense mechanism they applied during different situation. It can be

concluded that study about defense mechanism to reduce characters' anxiety in *The Book Thief* never be conducted before.

2.2   Review of Theoretical Studies

This sub chapter provides the theoretical review of this research.

2.2.1 Psychology

Psychology may be defined as the science that studies behavior of man (Hilgard, 1983, p. 100). Other definition refers psychology as a psychic study about human behavior. It happens because behavior is a real thing that can be seen directly, while psyche is an abstract. It is believed that by observing someone's behavior, it brings to understand about psyche condition. There is no doubt that people will express their psyche condition toward acts which can be seen by other people. Psychology is also concerned to the study about psychological phenomenon of human, its symptoms even its causes (Ahmadi, 2009, p.150). Psychology seems attach to human psyche, reaction of the psyche through behaviors and its cause will be analyzed deeply in this science. Human's problem also can be solved through this study. All of those aim for serving the tranquility life.

2.2.2 Psychology of Character in Fiction

Literature is believed as the representation of real life which is expressed through the language as medium. Therefore, fictional characters, as Paris (1997, p.4) said are not simply functions in a text or encoded message from the author but imagined human being whose thoughts, feelings and actions made sense in motivational terms. Paris also stated that indeed it is not taught that literature is about human

being, human relationship or experience, but a great literature always portrays the characters who seem to be as the same nature as ourselves. Paris believes that psychoanalytic theory has much to contribute to the understanding of literature and that it permits a conceptual clarity that cannot be derived from literature alone. Theory provides categories of understanding that help us to recover the intuitions of the great writers about the working of the human psyche (Paris, 1997, p.6). Psychoanalytic theory gives formulation about human behavior, whereas literature gives truth to experience. Because of its concrete, dramatic quality, literature enables not only to observe people other than ourselves, but also to enter into their mental universe, to discover what it feels like to be these people and to confront their life situations (Paris, 1997, p.6).

2.2.3 Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is defined as a set of psychological theories and therapeutic techniques that have their origin in the work and theories of Sigmund Freud. The core idea at the center of psychoanalysis is the belief that all people possess unconscious thoughts, feelings, desires, and memories.

Freud's original conception divided human personality into three levels: the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious. The conscious corresponds to its ordinary everyday meaning. It includes all the sensations and experiences of which we are aware at any given moment. If human personality is an iceberg, the conscious is the portion above the surface of the water while the unconscious is that larger, invisible portion below the surface. The unconscious is the focus of psychoanalytic theory. Its vast, dark depths are the home of the instincts, those

wishes and desires that direct our behavior. The unconscious contains the major driving power behind all behaviors and is the repository of forces people cannot see or control. Between these two levels is the preconscious. This is the storehouse of memories, perceptions, and thoughts of which people are not consciously aware at the moment but that it can be easily summoned into consciousness.

2.2.3.1. Concept of Psyche: Id, Ego, Superego
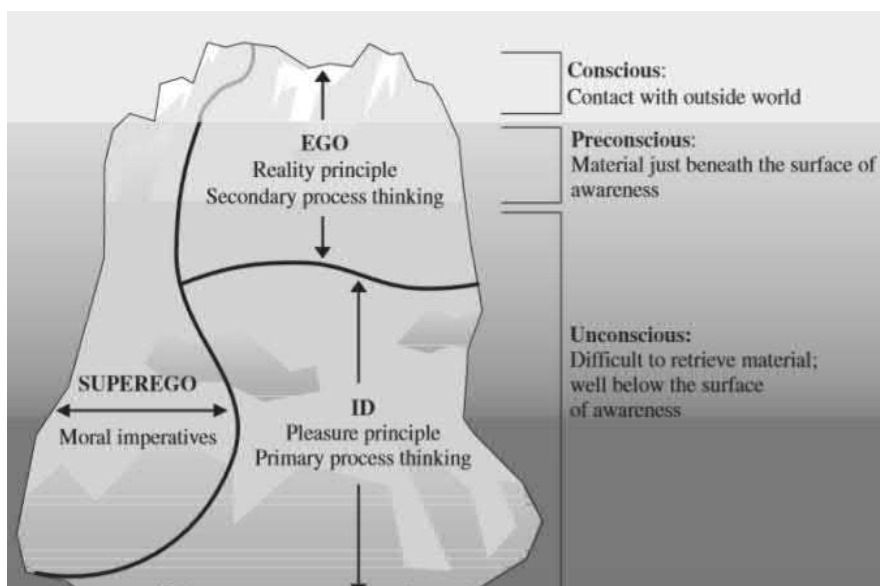
Figure 2.1 Freud's levels and structures of personality

Freud introduced three basic structures in the anatomy of the personality: the id, the ego, and the superego

The Id is the irrational, instinctual, unknown and unconscious part of the psyche. The id operates in accordance with what Freud called *the pleasure principle*. The id strives for immediate satisfaction of its needs and does not tolerate delay or postponement of satisfaction for any reason. Related to instint, according to Freud, human instinct has two drives, Eros and Thanatos. Eros or the life force represents drive to live, prosper, and produce offspring, while Thanatos or death

force represents our need to stay alive and stave of threats to our existence, our power, and our prosperity.

Whereas the id operates according to pleasure principle, the ego operates in harmony with *the reality principle*. It is the ego's job to regulate the instinctual desires of the id and to allow these desires to be released in some nondestructive ways (Bressler, 1998, p.150). The ego serves two masters—the id and reality—and is constantly mediating and striking compromises between their conflicting demands.

Superego is moral principle. To Freud, the moral aspect of personality is the internalization of parental and societal values and standards. Superego consists of conscience and ego-ideal. Conscience is component of the superego that contains behaviors for which the child has been punished. Ego-ideal is component of the superego that contains the moral or ideal behaviors for which a person should strive. The superego strives neither for pleasure (as does the id) nor for attainment of realistic goals (as does the ego). It strives solely for moral perfection.

The id presses for satisfaction, the ego tries to delay it, and the superego urges morality above all. The ego is caught in the middle, pressured by id and superego. The ego has a hard time by three dangers: the id, reality, and the superego. The inevitable result of this friction, when the ego is too severely strained, is the development of anxiety.

2.2.3.2. Anxiety

Anxiety is a signal that impending danger or a threat to the ego. It must be counteracted or avoided. The ego must reduce the conflict between the demands of the id and the strictures of society or the superego. Freud recognized three type of anxiety: reality anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety or feelings of guilt (Freud, 1926, p.45). The basic type of reality anxiety or fear of real dangers is in external world. The cause of this anxiety is usually easily identified. For example, a person might fear receiving a dog bite when they are near a menacing dog. The most common way of reducing this anxiety is to avoid the threatening object. Neurotic anxiety has its basis in childhood, in a conflict between instinctual gratification and reality. Neurotic anxiety is the fear that the instincts will get out of control and cause the person to do something for which she or he will be punished. Moral anxiety results from a conflict between the id and the superego. It fears of the conscience. People with well-developed superego tend to feel guilty or shame when they do something or even think of doing something that is contrary to the moral code (Hall, 1909, p.48) .Sometimes, anxiety can appears as remorse feeling. The other cause of anxiety can be all kinds of conflict or frustration.

2.2.3.3.Defense Mechanism

Defense mechanism is a strategy that the ego uses to protect itself from anxiety. Under the pressure of excessive anxiety, the ego is sometimes forced to take extreme measure to relieve the pressure. All defense mechanism have two characteristics in common: (1) they deny, falsify, or distort reality, and (2) they operate unconsciously. Freudian defense mechanisms are identification,

displacement, repression, denial, reaction formation, projection, regression, rationalization, and sublimation

1) *Identification*

Identification may be defined as the method by which a person takes over the features of another person and makes them a corporate part of his or her own personality (Hall, 1909: 49) Identification is also a method by which one may regain an object that has been lost.

2) *Displacement*

Displacement involves taking out frustrations, feelings, and impulses on people or objects that are less threatening. Displaced aggression is a common example of this defense mechanism. For example, aggressive impulse may be displaced, as in scapegoating, upon people (or inanimate object) who are not sources of frustration but safer to attack (Krech, 1974, p.585).

3) *Repression*

Repression is an involuntary removal of something from conscious awareness. It is an unconscious type of "forgetting of the existence of something that brings us discomfort or pain" (Schultz, 2008, p.64) and is the most fundamental and frequently used defense mechanism.

4) *Denial*

Denial is a defense mechanism that involves denying the existence of an external threat or traumatic event. For example parents of a child who has died may continue to deny the loss by keeping the child's room unchanged

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5) Projection

Projection is a defense mechanism that involves attributing a disturbing impulse to someone else. In projection, one simply says "She hates me" instead of "I hate her". It reduces anxiety by substituting a lesser danger for a greater one, and it enables the projecting person to express his impulses under the guise of defending himself against his enemies.

6) Sublimation

Sublimation is a defense mechanism that allows us to act out unacceptable impulses by converting these behaviors into a more acceptable form and more beneficial for society. Freud believed that sublimation was a sign of maturity that allows people to function normally in socially acceptable ways.

7) Reaction Formation

This is a defense mechanism that involves expressing an id impulse that is the opposite of the one that is truly driving the person. For example a person disturbed by extreme aggressive impulses, may become overly solicitous and friendly. Thus, lust becomes virtue and hatred becomes love, in the unconscious mind of the person using this mechanism

8) Rationalization

Rationalization is a defense mechanism that involves reinterpreting our behavior to make it more acceptable and less threatening to us. We excuse or justify a threatening thought or action by persuading ourselves there is a rational explanation for it.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this research is based on a reading of literature books, reference papers, and sources from internet related to this final project. In order to collect and analyze the data then answers the statements of the problems, I use Freudian's concept of psyche to find out anxiety of characters. Then I use defense mechanism theory by Sigmund Freud to analyze how characters deal with their anxiety. The framework of this study is displayed as down below:
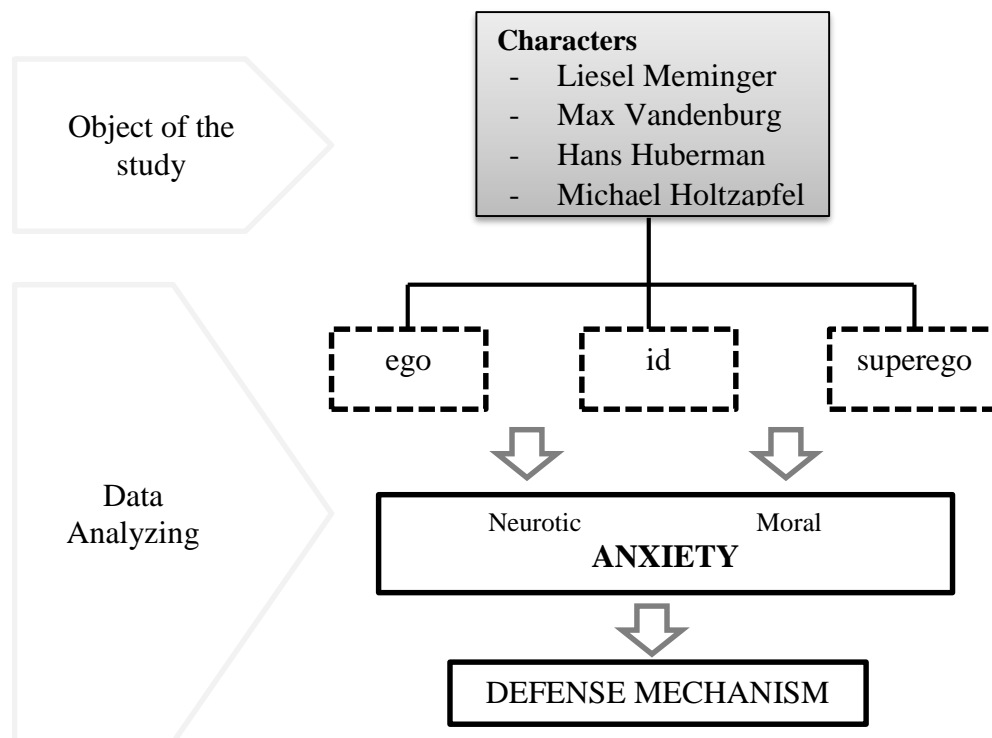
Figure 2.2 Theoretical Framework

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter presents the conclusion of the findings and discussion. The first subchapter consists of the conclusion in order to provide answers to the research problems of this study. The second subchapter of this chapter presents suggestions for further study related to the topic.

5.1 Conclusion

This part presents the conclusion drawn from the findings and discussion from the previous chapter. After analyzing characters in *The Book Thief,* I managed to draw conclusion that the characters' anxiety that depicted in the novel were mainly caused by their unconscious desire of being a human who has power. This unattainable id manifested into the conscious that could be seen through their action. Other anxiety that depicted in the novel was caused by the situation where characters' motivations to survive and living a happy life were sometimes opposite to their conscience and they could not help it but felt the guilt, this guilt was the form of their anxiety. To overcome their anxiety, characters use some defense mechanism like denial, displacement, sublimation, identification, sublimation and rationalization. This defense mechanism was unconsciously formed because the ego needed to be defensed from guilt and anxiety. The overwhelmed anxiety was dangerous, one character, Michael committed suicide because he did not applied any defense mechanism when he suffered from severe survivor's guilt. While other characters like Liesel, Hans, and Max could survive because they used the right

defense to reduce and to prevent more dangerous condition. So it could be concluded that defense mechanism did reduce anxiety.

5.2 Suggestion

Based on the conclusions above, suggestions are drawn which expected to be useful for me, the next researchers, and the readers. First, I think topic of anxiety and defense mechanism is a very relatable topic among society because most people ever suffer anxiety at least once in a lifetime. The example on how characters can manage to survive a traumatic war situation by using defense mechanism shows us how effective defense mechanism in reducing anxiety. Second, I suggest for people who read this study did not ignore history and what have happened toward humanity in the past. Last but not least, this study is expected to be a useful reference for future researchers who interested in Freudian psychoanalysis theory. Moreover, instead of using the common psychoanalysis theories, there are more complex topics that can be digged from *The Book Thief* like the development of morality of its characters, or the battle between instinct and ethic in Nazi society, or using existential critic to explore characters' authenticity.

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