

## Research Article

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# Speech And Thought Representation of the Split Personality Between the Narrator and Tyler Durden In *Fight Club* By Chuck Palahniuk

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## Abstract

This research is to analyze the stylistics elements of speech and thought of the narrator's and his split personality, Tyler Durden in *Fight Club* (1996) is Chuck Palahniuk. The analysis employs Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short's theory of speech and thought representation as presented in Paul Simpson's stylistics guidebook. The method of data collection is close reading the novel and then analyzing them with descriptive qualitative method. The research shows that the narrator is prominently represented thought representation while Tyler Durden most represented by speech representation. Through the progression of the plot's beginning, middle, and end part, the narrator and Tyler's characterizations and development as split personalities can be seen by their speech and thought representations. By analyzing both the narrator and Tyler Durden's speech and thought representation, it can be concluded that linguistic style choices are essential tools used by the author to enhance the reading experience.

**Keywords:** Fight Club; novel; stylistics; speech and thought representation; split personality

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## 1. Introduction

Stories presented in a literary works, especially short stories or novel cannot be separated from its linguistic roots. One of the linguistic branch that is often used for literary criticism is stylistic analysis. Stylistic analysis is a linguistic analysis of identifying patterns of speech and writing to comment on the quality or meaning of the text. Burke describes stylisticians as people with expertise in linguistics looking for language-based evidence in order to properly assess numerous other subjective interpretations and evaluations [1].

Speech and thought representation are the way an author constructs the speech and thoughts of their characters and narrators in order to create a coherent story [2]. Simpson stated that a stylistician must be aware of certain methods of which authors use to describe

the speech and thought of other people in their stories. This awareness can produce a new and interesting way to look at a literary text such in a linguistic perspective [2].

*Fight Club* is an American novel published by Chuck Palahniuk in 1996. It tells a story about an insomniac man who is burned out by the society's monotonous consumerism lifestyle. However, his worldview is challenged when he meets Tyler Durden, a wild but charismatic man with no regards to the rules of society. Together, they start their own 'fight club' where people can come and fight each other in order to let themselves loose. However, it is revealed at the end of the story that the narrator and Tyler Durden are actually split personalities, and the narrator must stop himself from destroying his society.

'Split personality disorder' is a popular term for Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID). DID is a mental disorder where a person has more than one distinct personality [3]. Changes caused by DID can completely revamp how someone sees their personal traits such as name, age, gender, and even memories [3]. The exact cause of DID is not yet fully confirmed, but it has often manifested due to the patient's trauma, especially in childhood, as a way cope from painful experience [3]. Other symptoms of DID can include anxiety, delusion, amnesia, losing sense of time, sleep disturbance, and out-of-body experiences [3]. This condition can severely hinder the patient's daily life and even lead to suicide [3].

This research is analyzing the narrator and Tyler Durden's speech and thought representations and how their way of speaking and thinking links to the fact that they are split personalities of each other. The research is only focusing on the original novel text of *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk. The speech and thought representation model used in this research comes from Leech and Short's model as presented in Paul Simpson's handbook, *Stylistics* (2004) [2].

## 2. Methods

The research would be a descriptive analysis that aims to examine the speech and thought representation of two characters in *Fight Club* (1996). The current research would be done as a library research by utilizing various scholarly references to aid the analysis of the novel.

The research would mainly use a qualitative research method. Qualitative research method is a type of social science research that focuses on interpretation and meaning of non-numerical data rather than numerical ones [4]. Qualitative method can be used as a better indicator of certain people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions through a certain science's perspectives [5].

The primary data of this analysis would be the instances of speech and thought representation of the narrator and Tyler Durden from certain chapters in the novel. The purposive sampling technique would be used in collecting the data. Purposive sample is a non-probability sample that is deliberately selected based on certain characteristics of the population and the objective of the current study [6].

The data collection would be done by using close reading method. Boyles and Scherer define close reading as the thoughtful and disciplined process of reading in order to uncover meanings contained inside a text that would lead to a better comprehension and

interpretation of a literary text [7]. The method of qualitative analysis would be an inferential methodology. The current study uses inductive inferential approach, which involves making broad generalizations from specific observations [8].

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 *The Narrator and Tyler Durden's Speech and Thought Representation*

Simpson (2004:30-33) classifies speech and thought representation into five categories each [6]. Speech representation consists of Direct Speech (DS), Indirect Speech (IS), Free Direct Speech (FDS), Free Indirect Speech (FIS), and Narrative Report of Speech Act (NRSA). Similarly thought representation consists of Direct Thought (DT), Indirect Thought (IT), Free Direct Thought (FDT), Free Indirect Thought (FIT), and Narrative Report of Thought Act (NRTA) [2].

Below are the tables for the frequency of the narrator and Tyler Durden's speech and thought representation. Two chapters are taken as a representative of each stage of the story, namely Chapter 3 and 5 for the Beginning part, Chapter 7 and 12 for the middle part, and Chapter 19 and 25 for the end part.

**Table 1.** Frequency of the Narrator's Speech and Thought Representation

Speech Representation			Thought Representation		
Type	Frequency	Percentage	Type	Frequency	Percentage
DS	0	0%	DT	0	0%
IS	16	20.78%	IT	17	15.89%
FDS	58	75.32%	FDT	90	84.11%
FIS	0	0	FIT	0	0%
NRSA	3	3.9%	NRTA	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the table, it is seen that the narrator has more thought representation than speech representation. The narrator's speech consists of 75.32% Free Direct Speech (FDS), 20.78% Indirect Speech (IS), and 3.9% Narrative Report of Speech Acts (NRSA). It is determined that FDS is the narrator's most prominent speech type. Meanwhile, the narrator's Free Direct Thought (FDT) is the most prominent type of thought representation, taking upwards of 84.11% of his overall thought representation. The only other thought representation type that the author has is Indirect Thought (IT), taking up only 15.89% of his overall thought representation,

Table 2. Frequency of Tyler Durden's Speech and Thought Representation

Speech Representation			Thought Representation		
Type	Frequency	Percentage	Type	Frequency	Percentage
DS	88	53.01%	DT	0	0%
IS	17	10.24%	IT	1	33.33%
FDS	49	29.52%	FDT	0	0%
FIS	5	3.01%	FIT	2	66.67%
NRSA	7	4.22%	NRTA	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the table, Tyler Durden's speech representation heavily outweighs his thought representation. Tyler has a variety of speech representation, with the most prominent being Direct Speech (DS) that takes up 53.01% of his overall speech representation. His other speech representations consist of 10.24% Indirect Speech (IS), 29.52% Free Direct Speech (FDS), 3.01% Free Indirect Speech, and 4.22% Narrative Report of Speech (NRSA). Meanwhile, Tyler's thought representation is almost non-existent, with only 3 instances total. Two types of his thought representation are 33.33% Indirect Thought and 66.67% Free Indirect Thought (FIT).

### 3.2 Comparison and Connection of Speech and Thought Representation

To draw the connection of their characters as split personalities, this part would examine their interactions in the novel and how their speech and thought styles clash with one another. This part will analyze them from Beginning, Middle, and End part of the plot.

#### 3.2.1 Chapter 3

Before delving into the beginning stage of the plot, it is important to consider the nature of *Fight Club*'s first-person narrative. The narrator of *Fight Club* is also a character in the story. The readers are essentially seeing inside the narrator's mind to see the events of the story through his perspective, hence why the narrator is mostly represented by thought. In Chapter 3, the narrator is depicted as someone who is lonely, bored, and depressed using his thought representation.

Life insurance pays off triple if you die on a business trip. **I prayed** for wind shear effect. **I prayed** for pelicans sucked into the turbines and loose bolts and ice on the wings. ... Every takeoff and landing, when the plane banked too much to one side, **I prayed** for a crash. [9] (Palahniuk, 1996:14)

The above excerpt from Chapter 3 shows the narrator's FDT thought representation as he boards a plane for his business trip. According to Simpson, FDT is characterized by the lack of reporting clause as well as quotation marks, giving the impression that the

character is expressing their thoughts freely without authorial interference [2]. This is almost like the narrator is only spacing out and spilling his suicidal thoughts to the readers, or rather, he is letting the readers to get inside his mind.

After he landed, the narrator goes to a nude beach to relax. This is where he first meets Tyler Durden.

With a stick, Tyler drew a straight line in the sand several feet away. Tyler went back to straighten the log by stamping sand around its base.

I was the only person watching this.

Tyler **called over**, “Do you know what time it is?”

I always wear a watch.

“Do you know what time it is?”

I asked, where?

“Right here,” Tyler **said**. “Right now.” [9] (Palahniuk, 1996:19)

From the above example, the narrator’s speech and thought representation is consisted of FDT and FDS. After a narration detailing what Tyler is doing, the first FDT is “I was the only person watching this”. The thought is presented as is without the usage of reporting cues like ‘think’ or ‘wonder’. Tyler then starts his first speech in the novel with DS. ‘Tyler’ is the subject, ‘called over’ is the cue, and “Do you know what time it is?” is the utterance. The narrator replies with an FDT again, thinking that he knows what time it is. Tyler asks one more time, this time using FDS with no subject or reporting cue, simply asking “Do you know what time it is?”. The narrator then replies with FDS, as he has the subject (‘I’) and a cue (‘asked’) but the utterance itself (‘where’) lacks a quotation mark, Tyler then answers again with DS (‘*Right here,*’ Tyler *said,*), followed by FDS (‘Right now’).

Tyler’s different way of speaking is immediately noticeable when put side by side with the narrator’s speech. The narrator’s speech is almost like a mumble when compared to Tyler’s speech. This difference serves as a subtle hint to Tyler’s identity as the narrator’s split personality. Split personalities often manifest as an identity far different from the original one, including different way of speaking [3]. From this chapter’s first meeting, we can infer that Tyler Durden is confident, strong, and free, unlike the narrator

### 3.2.2 Chapter 5

Chapter 5 is where the narrator’s characterization starts to change. In this chapter, the narrator and Tyler Durden have been acquainted. When the narrator’s apartment room blew up, he called Tyler to let him stay in his home. Tyler obliges only if the narrator first punch him really hard. The narrator and Tyler headed to the parking lot of a bar to fight.

So we went outside, and I **asked** if Tyler wanted it in the face or in the stomach.

Tyler said, “Surprise me.”

I **said** I had never hit anybody.

Tyler said, “So go crazy, man.” [9] (Palahniuk, 1996:35)

The above excerpt shows the narrator is talking to Tyler in a parking lot before they decide to fight. Each of their manner of speaking show the difference between the narrator’s meeker personality and Tyler’s confidence. The narrator is showing hesitation to hit Tyler while Tyler is confidently urging him to fight. After their fight, they lie down and talk about their pasts.

Lying on our backs in the parking lot, staring up at the one star that came through the streetlights, I **asked** Tyler what he’d been fighting. Tyler **said**, his father.” [9] (Palahniuk, 1996:35-36)

The above example shows both characters using IS. The source of Tyler’s frustration is his father. This is a subtle clue to their true nature as split personalities often come from childhood neglect or trauma [3]. Chapter 5 is also where the titular ‘fight club’ is founded. In the club, Tyler has a commanding presence while the narrator is only watching from the sideline.

Tyler gets under the one light in the middle of the black concrete basement and he can see that light flickering back out of the dark in a hundred pairs of eyes. First thing Tyler **yells** is, “The first rule about fight club is you don’t talk about fight club. [9] (Palahniuk, 1996:33)

Tyler uses DS to explain the rules of fight club to a room full of men. The DS formula of (S + reporting cue + “utterance”) is used when Tyler explains the first rule. The usage of the reporting clause “yell” indicates a stronger intensity of speech than the previous example of “say”. The utterance (‘you don’t talk about fight club’) shows the importance of keeping its secret, and Tyler has enough charisma convince his audience.

Inside this fight club is where the narrator is slowly shifting his characterization. He is slowly changing from a regular meek employee into a violent fighter.

Most guys are at fight club because of something they’re too scared to fight. After a few fights, you’re afraid a lot less. [9] (Palahniuk, 1996:36)

The above excerpt shows his thought representation in the form of FDT. His thought is just presented as is without any subject or reporting clause. He expresses in his mind that after some fighting experiences, he feels less scared to hurt someone else.

### 3.2.3 Chapter 7

The middle part of the story comes as the narrator is getting used to his new lifestyle when living with Tyler Durden. The narrator cares less about his old boring corporate lifestyle. The narrator wonders if he is closer to becoming a man like Tyler. Tyler remarks

that he still has a long way to go, and burns the narrator's hand to show their difference of mindset.

"Come back to the pain," Tyler says.

This is the kind of guided meditation they use at support groups.

Don't even think of the word pain.

Guided meditation works for cancer, it can work for this.

"Look at your hand," Tyler says.

Don't look at your hand.

Don't think of the word searing or flesh or tissue or charred. [9] (Palahniuk, 1996:47)

The narrator and Tyler's representation are in a direct contrast here. All of the Tyler's above speech are DS. The narrator tries to combat it by using his thoughts. His meditation technique is shown by rapid instances of FDT, where he tells himself to 'don't think' about the pain. His mind is free flowing without the usage of subjects and reporting cues for his thought.

However, with the pain from the chemical burn, Tyler is talking his way into the narrator's mind and feeding him dark thoughts until he adopts the same mindset. By the end of the burning, the narrator finally gives in to Tyler's speech. For the second time readers, they will get the idea that the narrator is pouring burning chemicals to himself, and his exchange with Tyler is actually him wrestling with himself. This is an example of how a split personality can hurt the original personality, both physically and mentally [3].

### 3.2.4 Chapter 12

This chapter explains that Tyler and the narrator have been doing terrible things in their jobs. In this chapter, they are trying to quit their jobs but demanding to still be paid, leveraging their boss with their company reputation.

In the first thirty seconds, I told how I'd been peeing into soup, farting on creme brulees, sneezing on braised endive, and now I wanted the hotel to send me a check every week equivalent to my average week's pay plus tips. [9] (Palahniuk, 1996:75)

The above excerpt shows the narrator's speech to the hotel manager. It is presented as IT, with Subject ('I'), reporting cue ('told'), and the backshifted utterance detailing his misdeed during his time in the hotel.

Tyler's **words coming out** of my mouth.

And I used to be such a nice person. [9] (Palahniuk, 1996:75)

The above instances are the narrator's NRSA and FDT respectively. The first example is an NRSA with the reporting cue ('coming out of') and the subject is ('Tyler's words').

It details how the narrator is spouting the same horrible things Tyler has said. It is followed by a freest form of FDT, as the narrator laments on how his attitude has changed. However, the most interesting part of the chapter comes later, when the narrator suddenly starts punching himself.

The monster crawls across the carpet, hot and picking up the lint and dust sticking to the blood on its claws. And it crawls close enough to grab the manager of the Pressman Hotel around his pinstriped ankle and **say** it. Money. And I **giggle**, again. And **please** don't hit me, again.

Please.

Say it.

Please comes out in a bubble of blood. [9] (Palahniuk, 1996:77)

The above excerpt shows the narrator hurting himself and claiming that he is being dragged by a 'monster'. The narrator seems to lose control, as speech becomes borderline incomprehensible. The narrator describes the 'monster' with the reporting cue 'say', indicating a FDS because of the lack of subject. The utterance itself ('Money') is directed towards the manager as a means to threaten him. However, the next speech ('And please don't hit me, again.', 'Please', 'Say it') is quite unclear as to who it is addressed to. For second-time readers, it is clear that the 'monster' is Tyler trying to come out.

### 3.2.4 Chapter 19

Chapter 19 contains the reveal of the narrator and Tyler's true nature, The sleepless narrator is alone in a hotel room wondering about Tyler and his situation. When he is about to fall asleep, Tyler shows up out of nowhere in his bed to tell him everything.

Tyler **said**. "We're not two separate men. Long story short, when you're awake, you have the control, and you can call yourself anything you want, but the second you fall asleep, I take over, and you become Tyler Durden."

But we fought, I **say**. The night we invented fight club.

"You weren't really fighting me," Tyler **says**. "You said so yourself. You were fighting everything you hate in your life."

But I can see you.

"You're asleep." [9] (Palahniuk, 1996:114)

The above excerpt finally puts things into perspective for first time readers. The two sides of the same person finally on the same page. Every interaction leading up to that moment changes dramatically. It is not the story of how the narrator is manipulated by another person better than him. It is the story of the narrator slowly losing his sanity.

"No," Tyler says, still holding my hand, "I wouldn't be here in the first place if you didn't want me. I'll still live my life while you're asleep, but if you fuck with me, if

you chain yourself to the bed at night or take big doses of sleeping pills, then we'll be enemies. And I'll get you for it."

Oh, this is bullshit. This is a dream. Tyler is a projection. He's a disassociative personality disorder. A psychogenic fugue state. Tyler Durden is my hallucination. "Fuck that shit," Tyler says. "Maybe you're my schizophrenic hallucination." [9] (Palahniuk, 1996:115)

The battle inside their minds can be seen from their speech and thought representations. Both the narrator and Tyler uses some forms of FDS. According to Leech & Short, FDS representation shifts the control of the utterance away from author, making it seems that the character is free to express what they want [10]. Palahniuk lets the two characters express their speech as wildly as they could to show how desperate they are to come out on top.

### 3.2.5 Chapter 25

From the gap between Chapter 19 and 25, the narrator has been trying to stop Project Mayhem and its members. The other members are now targeting him. Even when he claims to be Tyler Durden, they would not stop chasing him. During those chapters, Tyler's personality has been lying dormant. However, in Chapter 25, when the narrator is exhausted after running and fighting amidst the chaos, Tyler comes back to greet him one last time to kill him.

Oh, Tyler, I hurt. Just kill me here.

"Get up."

Kill me, already. Kill me. Kill me. Kill me. Kill me.

"It has to be big," Tyler says. "Picture this: you on top of the world's tallest building, the whole building taken over by Project Mayhem. Smoke rolling out the windows. Desks falling into the crowds on the street. A real opera of a death, that's what you're going to get." (Palahniuk, 1996:139)

The above excerpt shows their exchange when Tyler urges the narrator to follow him to the top of a building. The narrator is already resigning his will to live, as shown with his FDS ('Oh Tyler, I hurt. Just kill me here') that lacks any subject or reporting clause. The FDS form continues with his next speech ('Kill me, already. Kill me...') The use of FDS shows how much the narrator wants his suffering to end. However, Tyler with his FDS ('Get up' and 'Picture this: you on top of the world's tallest building, the whole building taken over by Project Mayhem...') tells him to not die yet as he has a better plan for him: blowing him up along with the tallest building in the city.

The barrel of the gun pressed against the back of my throat, Tyler says, "We won't really die."

To God, this looks like one man alone, holding a gun in his own mouth, but it's Tyler holding the gun, and it's my life [9] (Palahniuk, 1996:140)

The above excerpt shows Tyler's DS and the narrator's FDT as they talk at the building set to explode. Tyler's DS has subject ('Tyler'), reporting cue ('says'), and the utterance enclosed in quotation marks. This is actually Tyler's last speech in the novel, and he uses it to claim that even if he would die, Tyler will still win in destroying society through the damages he causes. Meanwhile, the narrator's thought laments powerlessly as he points the gun at himself. However, before Tyler can kill him, a crowd of people from the support groups the narrator attends tells the narrator not to kill himself. The narrator responds by telling them to go away.

I yell, go. Get out of here. This building is going to explode.  
I'm not killing myself, I yell. I'm killing Tyler. [9] (Palahniuk, 1996:140-141)

The above excerpt shows the narrator telling them to go away using FDS. It has subject ('I') and reporting cue ('yell'). The usage of 'yell' is rather surprising coming from the usually calm narrator, as it implies the narrator cares enough about their safety to tell warn them of the dangers of explosion. He also reassures them that he is not killing himself, but merely a destructive part of him. Eventually, the bomb timer is over, but there is no explosion because Tyler mixed the wrong chemicals in the bomb.

The barrel of the gun tucked in my surviving cheek, I say, Tyler, you mixed the nitro with paraffin, didn't you.  
Paraffin never works.  
I have to do this. [9] (Palahniuk, 1996:141)

The above excerpt shows the narrator FDS that tells Tyler he mixed the wrong materials. The FDS has subject ('I') and a reporting cue ('say') along with the unquoted utterance. This time, Tyler has no reply. With the nullified bomb and people to protect, the narrator finally has the courage to kill Tyler once and for all. His final FDT ('I have to do this') shows his clarity of mind as he pulls the gun trigger.

It should be noted that in the next chapter, even with the narrator in a hospital and Tyler seemingly killed for good, the narrator must live the rest of his life with the burden that his repressed destructive side caused. This might be a nod to how there is still no definite cure for split personality disorder yet [3].

## 5. Conclusion

From the previous chapters, it can be seen that the narrator's representation is dominated by thought representations and Tyler Durden's representation is mostly consisted of speech representations. Their contrasting speech and thought representation can be seen as a sign that they are actually two personalities occupying a single body. The

narrator's speech and thought shows his passive and introverted personality as well as his deteriorating mind, while Tyler's speech and thought representation shows him as a strong and confident but ultimately harmful to the narrator. Using the narrator character, the author has depicted the behaviour of someone with split personalities accurately.

As the readers follow along the plot from beginning, middle and end, the narrator and Tyler's speech and thought representation serve to show their characterizations and developments. *Fight Club* (1996) is showing how the narrator is coping with his destructive side. The author's choices of the narrator and Tyler Durden's speech and thought help enhance their character interactions and progression.

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