

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the background of the study, the research questions, and the objectives. It also describes the scope and limitations to clarify the focus of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature is not only used to understand human experiences, but also serves as the main source for film adaptation. Literary works provide core narrative elements such as plot, character, and theme, which can be transformed into visual stories. Frago (2016) explains that adaptation is a dialogue between different media, where stories are reinterpreted rather than simply copied. This means literature can be reshaped into new forms. Similarly, Dixit (2025) states that adapting literature into film requires balancing creativity and fidelity, showing that adaptation is a process of negotiation between the original text and cinematic expression. Therefore, literature functions as a flexible narrative source that allows stories to be transformed into film through adaptation.

Building on this role, film adaptation has become a major cultural practice in contemporary creative industries because it transforms literary texts into audiovisual narratives that reach wider audiences. However, the relationship between film and literature was not always accepted. Early critics often viewed film as a potential threat to literature and questioned the value of adapting literary works into cinema. Over time, this perception changed as film adaptations demonstrated their cultural significance by making literary works accessible to wider audiences and by popularising many texts beyond traditional readership (Tan, 2022). Instead of competing with each other, literature and film support one another, helping audiences understand the same story from different perspectives (Tan, 2022). Therefore, adaptation can be understood as a cultural bridge that connects literature and cinema while enabling stories to be reinterpreted through different narrative forms.

Literature and film differ fundamentally in the way they construct and communicate narrative meaning. According to Mariani (2024), literature and

cinema function through distinct sign systems, where written texts rely on verbal description and reader imagination, while film conveys meaning through visual images, sound, and performance. This distinction means that a written narrative allows readers to imagine characters and settings freely, whereas film must present concrete visual representations within a limited duration. As a result, the shift from page to screen requires structural and aesthetic transformation rather than a simple transfer of content. As Pasopati et al. (2024) point out, the process of adaptation allows the same story to produce different meanings when it is presented in film form. Similarly, Rani (2025) emphasizes that film adaptations should be understood as independent works rather than merely derivative versions of literary texts, since the process of adaptation reshapes narrative elements such as plot, character, and theme according to the possibilities of visual media. Therefore, the differences between literary and cinematic media inevitably lead to the transformation of narrative elements such as plot, character, and setting when a story is adapted from page to screen.

The differences between literary and cinematic media become more obvious when the source text is a short story. A short story is a form of fiction that typically centers on a single main event or situation. According to Russell (2009), modern short stories often focus on a single situation or a moment of awareness rather than on a long and complex plot. They usually do not provide detailed background information or multiple subplots. Instead, short stories rely on suggestion and ambiguity, allowing readers to interpret what is not directly stated. The limited and concise structure of a short story makes it difficult to adapt into a feature-length film. A film typically requires clearer development, expanded character arcs, and sustained dramatic progression to maintain audience engagement.

Adaptation from literature to film inevitably involves narrative transformation. As Littlejohn (2018) explains, when a story shifts from text to screen, it undergoes changes because each medium operates through different expressive systems. Literature depends on descriptive language and reader imagination, while film relies on visual representation, sound, and performance. The transformation can be seen in *Drive My Car*, directed by Ryusuke Hamaguchi, which is based on Haruki Murakami's short story of the same title from the

anthology *Men Without Women* (2017), with a length of around 35 pages. The film develops this concise narrative into a three-hour cinematic work and received the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film (IMDB, 2021). This indicates that adaptation goes beyond simply transferring content, as it involves a creative process that reconstructs and reshapes narrative elements within a different medium.

However, not all adaptations achieve the same level of success. Adapting literary works into films may allow stories to reach wider audiences, but the results can vary significantly. One example is *Norwegian Wood*, adapted from the novel by Haruki Murakami. Although the novel gained international recognition, the film received mixed responses. A study titled *The Movie Adaptation of the Novel Norwegian Wood* explains that the film reduced several important narrative elements from the original text and simplified the story structure (Januarti, 2022). The research shows that the movie mainly emphasised the psychological aspect of the protagonist while omitting or condensing other plot developments and supporting characters. Because Murakami's novel relies heavily on internal reflection and emotional nuance, this reduction limited the film's ability to convey the same narrative depth. This case demonstrates that adaptation involves selective transformation, and that the effectiveness of a film depends on how successfully it translates complex literary elements into visual storytelling.

To analyse this transformation systematically, a clear theoretical framework is required. Seger (1992) argues that adapting a story into film is not merely moving it from one medium to another, but involves reorganizing its narrative elements so they work effectively within a cinematic context. According to Seger, adaptation commonly involves strategies such as condensation, expansion, and varied change, which allow filmmakers to adjust plot structure, develop characters, and modify settings to suit visual storytelling. These strategies are particularly relevant when adapting a short story, where the limited narrative scope often requires expansion in order to sustain a feature-length film. Using Seger's framework, this study aims to analyze how the intrinsic narrative elements of *Drive My Car* are transformed from the original short story into a film narrative. This theoretical approach

provides a structured way to understand how and why specific narrative changes occur in the adaptation process.

Several previous studies have examined how literary works are adapted into film. Haryasandi (2024) explains that the adaptation process, through the concept of ecranisation, involves addition, reduction, and variation of narrative elements to adjust the story into a cinematic form. Dita (2018) finds that the film adaptation of *Inferno* changes the plot and characters to match audience expectations, while Shofa (2018) demonstrates that *To Kill a Mockingbird* simplifies its story to make it clearer in film. Azharoh (2023) analyzes the adaptation of *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen into a film directed by Jon Jones, combining adaptation theory and semiotics. The study reveals that the film shifts the original ideas, such as patriarchy and social class, into more modern issues like gender and culture, reflecting the filmmaker's perspective. In addition, Yusar (2018) argues that adaptation is influenced by cultural, psychological, and economic factors, with financial motives as the most dominant. These studies show that adaptation is not just copying a story, but changing it based on different needs and contexts. However, most of these studies focus on general changes or reasons behind adaptation, not on how specific narrative elements change. Most of them also study novels, not short stories. Because of this, adaptation from short story to film is still less discussed. In addition, few studies use a clear framework to analyze how plot, character, and setting are changed. The film *Drive My Car* is also rarely studied in adaptation research. Therefore, this study focuses on how narrative elements are transformed, especially how a short story is developed into a more complex film.

Based on the discussion above, this study aims to examine how the intrinsic narrative elements of Haruki Murakami's short story *Drive My Car* are transformed in the film adaptation directed by Ryusuke Hamaguchi. This study focuses on these narrative changes to see how a short and simple story can become a full-length film without losing its main themes. By focusing on these narrative transformations, the study seeks to understand how a concise short story is developed into a feature-length film while maintaining its thematic core. Through this analysis, the research contributes to adaptation studies by providing a structured examination of how narrative meaning is reshaped when a short story moves from page to screen.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the differences in narrative elements (plot, character, and setting) between the short story and the film adaptation of *Drive My Car*?
2. How are these narrative differences constructed through Seger's adaptation strategies and their narrative functions in the film?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the differences in narrative elements (plot, character, and setting) between Haruki Murakami's short story *Drive My Car* and its film adaptation directed by Ryusuke Hamaguchi.
2. To analyze how these narrative differences are constructed through Seger's adaptation strategies (condensation, expansion, and varied change) and to examine their narrative functions in the film.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this study contributes to adaptation studies by focusing on short story to film adaptation, which is still less discussed compared to novel adaptations. By using Linda Seger's theory, this research provides a clear way to understand how narrative elements such as plot, character, and setting are changed in the adaptation process. This study also helps show how a short and simple story can be reorganized into a film narrative. In addition, it can be used as a reference for future researchers who want to study adaptation.

Practically, this study is useful for several groups. For students, it gives a simple and clear way to analyze film adaptation. For future researchers, it provides an example of how to apply Seger's theory in analyzing narrative changes. For lecturers, it can be used as supporting material in teaching adaptation. For readers or viewers, this study helps them understand the film more deeply by showing how the story is structured and presented in the adaptation process.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on the adaptation of *Drive My Car*, analyzing how the story is changed from Haruki Murakami's short story into the film directed by

Ryusuke Hamaguchi. Even though narrative elements include many aspects, this study only focuses on plot, character, and setting because they are the main parts of a story and show the most visible changes in adaptation. Using Linda Seger's theory, this study examines how the plot is reorganized, how characters are developed or changed, and how the setting is adjusted to fit the film format.

This study has several limitations that may affect the results. First, the analysis is limited to selected narrative units, such as dialogues, narrations, and scenes, which represent the transformation of plot, character, and setting. This means that not all parts of the short story and the film are analyzed in detail. Second, the study relies on a qualitative approach, which involves interpretation by the researcher, so the findings may be influenced by subjective analysis. Third, the study only uses Linda Seger's theory of adaptation, which may not cover all possible perspectives in adaptation studies. Due to these limitations, the findings of this study are not intended to be generalized, but to provide a focused understanding of narrative transformation in *Drive My Car*.